



the Heron



A newsletter from the Islands Trust Conservancy, protecting islands in the Salish Sea | islandstrustconservancy.ca

SPRING 2021

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Islands Trust Conservancy Manager Kate Emmings with son Dylan. PHOTO: KEITH ERICKSON

Kate Emmings reflects on 14 years and what's next for the team

Reaffirming her commitment as Manager, Islands Trust Conservancy

Courage, wisdom, and heart. Qualities that one might look for in a colleague, in a friend, and in our case, in a leader. Kate Emmings has held the post of Acting Islands Trust Conservancy Manager since July 2018, and as of January 2021 she has accepted the role on a permanent basis.

“Kate has always had the respect of the Islands Trust Conservancy Board through her open and nuanced understanding of our vision for the organization,” said Board Chair Kate-Louise Stamford.

When asked what gives her the greatest job satisfaction, Emmings said, “I like problem solving. Helping people

who struggle with complex systems to do what they want to do — to make it simpler for them to protect nature.”

“It’s good to work in an organization where you can have a hand in a little bit of everything and that quick visibility to what you have accomplished. We’re not so big that we can’t talk to people on the ground.”

Are there challenges that spark a sense of urgency for her? “We’re on the threshold of still having enough wild spaces surrounding our urban centres to be able to care for them responsibly, or making the one wrong step that could destroy them forever.”

“It’s an interesting time, where climate change and adaptation strategies are prominent, the interconnection of land conservation and reconciliation has become so vital, and we have the chance to engage in those more complex conversations and get meaningful work done.” Her enthusiasm is noticeable. “I am not afraid of hard conversations — I love them. That’s the way to move things forward.” 🌿

Acknowledgement

Islands Trust Conservancy acknowledges that we work within the treaty lands and territories of the BOKÉCÉN, Cowichan Tribes, Halalt, K’ómoks, Lək’wəḡən (SXIMELEL, Songhees, T’Sou-ke), Lyackson, MÁLEXEL, ʔop qaymıxʷ, Penelakut, Qualicum, scəwáθən məsteyəxʷ, Scia’new, səlilwətaʔt, SEMYOME, shíshálh, Snaw-naw-as, Skwxwú7mesh, Snuneymuxw, STÁUTW, Stz’uminus, ʔəʔamən qaymıxʷ, toq qaymıxʷ, Ts’uubaa-asatx, We Wai Kai, Wei Wai Kum, WJOLELP, WSIKEM and xʷməθkʷəy̓əm.



Canoe detail. PHOTO: LISA WILCOX

The remarkable legacy of Sara Steil

A force for conservation on the Pender islands

Sara Steil undoubtedly had a vision. The paths she forged on her life's journey all lead to caring for marine life and the land that she held dear — the Pender islands. We can never underestimate the power of one person to create a legacy, and Sara did just that.

It is small wonder that she received an Islands Trust Special 2019 Community Stewardship Award for Lifetime Achievement. She contributed extensively to land use decision-making through numerous North Pender Island Local Trust Committee public processes, the official community plan, and land use bylaw development, and was a founding member of the Pender Islands Trust Protection Society. Sara was also an active member of the Pender Islands Conservancy Association, and worked passionately to preserve and protect the marine environment by contributing to the Pleasure Craft Pollution Prevention Program and conducting inventories on forage fish beaches to confirm spawning habitat.

We can never underestimate the power of one person to create a legacy, and Sara did just that.

In 2009 Sara and her husband Richard (Dick) protected their 1.4-hectare property on North Pender through the Natural Area Protection Tax Exemption Program (NAPTEP) by placing a conservation covenant on their land title. Forevermore the Steils' Woods Covenant protects wild strawberry and western trilliums amid forests of tall firs, cedars, and maples, and protects part of a wetland that is home to amphibians and visiting Great Blue Herons.



A shining example of the impact one person can make: Sara Steil with her dog Shelby. PHOTO SUBMITTED

Whether through policy-making, public education, or through protecting her own piece of land, Sara has helped to shape how land and marine life is valued on the Pender islands. Through her commitment to the “preserve and protect” mandate of Islands Trust Conservancy, her vision will have an impact that will be felt by future generations.

She will be remembered. 🌿

Carla Funk, Fundraising Specialist
cfunk@islandstrust.bc.ca



Protect the land and save on taxes:

A conservation covenant registered through NAPTEP means you receive an annual property tax exemption of 65% on the protected portion of the land. Visit islandstrustconservancy.ca/naptep

Sharp-tailed Snake

Species at Risk Spotlight

The name of this endangered species, “Sharp-tailed Snake” (scientific name *Contia tenuis*), might conjure up images of a fearsome creature, but these peaceful, non-venomous snakes are not so scary. They are only about the size of a large earthworm!

Sharp-tailed Snakes are named after the unique point at the tip of their tail. Secretive and slow moving, these little brown snakes spend most of their time keeping warm under rocks, leaf litter, decaying logs, or loose bark, and venturing out when conditions are just right to hunt for slugs and earthworms. Sharp-tailed Snakes are most active during the spring and fall.

Most of this snake’s prime habitat of south-facing, rocky Douglas-fir/Arbutus woodland is unprotected and threatened by development and other human impacts. As one of only five reptiles native to coastal British Columbia, the Sharp-tailed Snake is an important part of the biodiversity of our region.

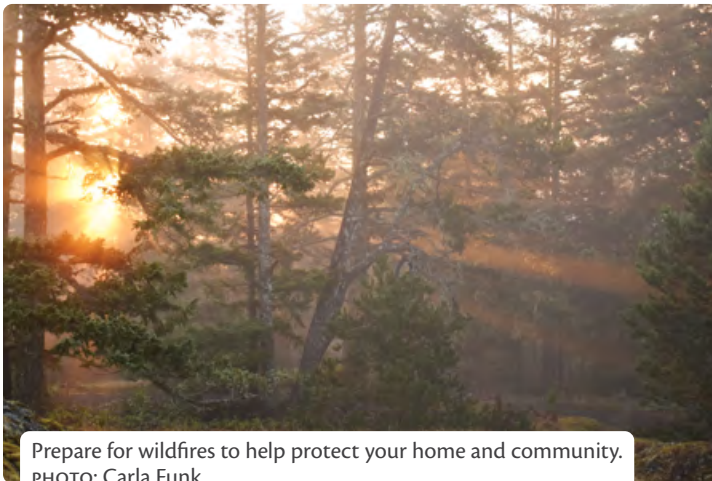


The Sharp-tailed Snake is extremely rare in Canada, existing in a handful of isolated populations on southern Vancouver Island, the southern Gulf Islands, and Pemberton. PHOTO: CHRISTIAN ENGELSTOFT

There are many things, big and small, that you can do to protect Sharp-tailed Snakes:

- Protect habitat by limiting roads and other development, particularly in open, sunny woodlands
- Avoid disturbing piles of rock or decaying logs and tree stumps where snakes live
- Embrace slugs (the snake’s primary prey), earthworms, and insects 🌿

Fire preparedness and forest stewardship essentials



Prepare for wildfires to help protect your home and community. PHOTO: Carla Funk

Regular, low-severity wildfires are a natural and important part of healthy forest ecosystems in our region. Yet, the risk of fire has increased in recent years due to climate change, fire suppression, and landscape development. With wildfire season approaching, we encourage you to take wildfire preparedness measures compatible with forest stewardship.

The following actions can help protect your home and community:

- **Advocate for the protection of mature and old-growth forests**, nature’s fire break. A shady canopy of large trees and lush understory maintain a cool, moist microclimate that resists fire
- **Fireproof your home.** Start with easy fixes, like moving your firewood pile further away from your home, clearing debris build-up from your roof and under your deck or stairs, and ensuring that exterior doors are properly fitted
- **Create a 10-metre fire-resistant buffer around your home.** Clear out accumulations of dead leaves and small branches; remove flammable invasive plants like Scotch broom and English holly; garden with fire-resistant native plants like bigleaf maple and salal

If you are planning work in a covenant area, please be sure to contact us to discuss your plans. 🌿

To learn more about Sharp-tailed Snakes and what you can do to protect their habitat, or with questions about Fire Preparedness, contact Covenant Management and Outreach Specialist Jemma Green: jgreen@islandstrust.bc.ca.

Tender care for Trincomali — a story in photos

Trincomali Nature Sanctuary was created in 2001 through a collaboration between Islands Trust Conservancy, The Land Conservancy of British Columbia (TLC), Habitat Acquisition Trust (HAT), and the federal government. Islands Trust Conservancy's primary concern for this site from the beginning was protection of the seabird colonies.

Trincomali's cliffs are home to sensitive bird nesting habitat for several species at risk.

Invasive Scotch broom is a serious threat to biodiversity as it displaces native plant communities that birds, butterflies, and other animals rely on for habitat. We want to remove invasive species such as this to maintain the ecological integrity of the land. As the bird colonies are sensitive to movement and sound, we ensure that any management work is done outside the bird nesting season. 🌿



HAT volunteer Simon Bluck



HAT volunteer Denis Raimbault

Aerial shot taken of entire work party — note that the dark green colour against the light green is the target invasive species Scotch broom. PHOTO: MILEN KOOTNIKOFF | MIKO PHOTO, COURTESY OF HABITAT ACQUISITION TRUST



30 Nature Reserves in 30 years!

Celebrating the preserve and protect mandate 1990–2020

In its 30th year, Islands Trust Conservancy is celebrating that Sandy Beach on Lhek'tines/Keats Island will become its 30th nature reserve. Sandy Beach includes 3.4 hectares (8.4 acres) of Coastal Douglas-fir forest and over 250 metres of beachfront.

The Skwxwú7mesh (Squamish) people have a long interconnected history with Lhek'tines (also known as Keats Island). The island is laden with place names and areas of cultural significance, and is treasured by islanders for its beauty and important ecological values. This nature reserve assures that the southwest section of Keats will never face development.

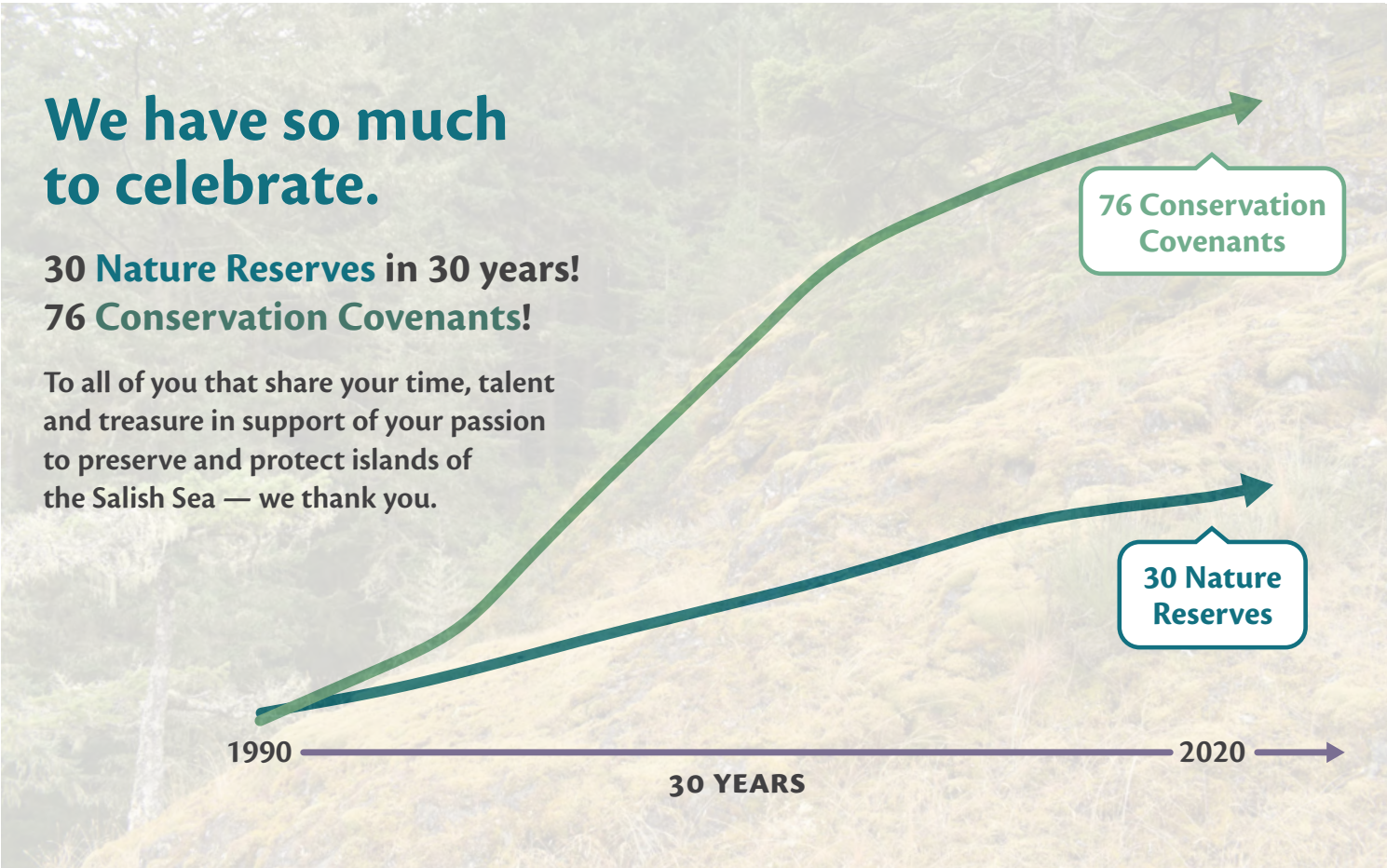
Who would have imagined that in 30 years so much would be accomplished? We are grateful to all those that have made this possible by caring for the land both now and through the millennia.

The Islands Trust Conservancy cares for 76 conservation covenants, restricting development. Most were donated by people who love nature. Partners, donors, and volunteers have come together to help create, manage, and maintain 30 nature reserves.

We are grateful to all those that have made this possible

Together, we're on our way to ensuring that more of these special, fragile places are protected for future generations. We know we can't do it alone.

Thank you for all that you have done to help us on this journey. 🌿



Celebrating 30 years of conservation

2020 ●

30th nature reserve created, on Keats Island!

2018 ●

Renamed Islands Trust Conservancy.
10-year Regional Conservation Plan launched

2015 ●

NAPTEP available throughout Islands
Trust Area (Bowen last to sign on)

2008 ●

Over 15% of Islands Trust Area land
protected by public and non-profit
conservation organizations.
1000 ha protected

2003 ●

500 ha protected; NAPTEP (Natural Area
Protection Tax Exemption Program)
piloted on Gambier Island

1997 ●

100 ha protected

1990 ●

April 1: Islands Trust Act is amended,
establishing Islands Trust Fund.
May 17: first Trust Fund Board meeting

● 2019

Reconciliation Declaration acknowledges that the
islands and the waters that encompass the Salish
Sea have been home to Indigenous Peoples since
time immemorial

● 2016

100 places protected!

● 2010

Fairy Fen Nature Reserve on Bowen Island
becomes 20th nature reserve in 20 years.
Total of 60 conservation covenants

● 2005

Five Year Regional Conservation Plan.
Opportunity Fund established to support land
purchases for nature reserves or conservation
covenants. 50 places protected

● 2000

15 conservation covenants and 8 nature reserves
created on 10 islands

● 1992

First conservation covenant, on Salt Spring
Island. First nature reserves, on Denman and
Salt Spring Islands

S’ul-hween X’pey/Elder Cedar: a sign by any other name

To say that Eliot White-Hill (Coast Salish name: Kwulasultun) has had a successful past year is an understatement, but he remains humble and curious, possibly taking after his grandmother — linguist, midwife, healer, and Elder, Dr. Ellen White (Kwulasulwut). It was she that named the S’ul-hween X’pey Nature Reserve in Hul’q’umi’num’ (meaning: “Elder Cedar”) in 2008, and it is in her honour that Eliot approaches creating a new sign to welcome visitors.

“My whole journey into art stems from her,” he said. “She has [passed away] but in a lot of ways, she’s still teaching me. I’ve read all these anthropological texts, old colonial documents — which can teach you a lot — but to understand this place, you need to hear the stories of our people.”

“I’m going to revisit those texts to understand what is special about Gabriola, this specific part of Gabriola, and I want to



S’ul-hween X’pey (Elder Cedar) Nature Reserve. PHOTO: K. MAYES

speak to our Elders to learn not just about that history but also about the specific language used to describe it. Can we have fun with the language? Include the names of plants and animals in Hul’q’umi’num’? That’s what I’d like to explore.” 🌿

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🖱️ To donate online visit:
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Questions? Contact us!

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Share your vision with future generations — please consider remembering Islands Trust Conservancy in your will.

*Islands Trust Conservancy is a qualified donee as a Crown agent under B.C.’s *Islands Trust Act*. Islands Trust business # 122013576 RT0001

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