



the Heron



Summer 2017 A newsletter from the Islands Trust Fund, a conservancy for Canada's Islands in the Salish Sea



Moore Hill, Thetis Island, photo: P. Luckham.

Conservation Success Creates 100th Protected Place for Islands Trust Fund

A unique unspoiled waterfront forest on the east coast of Thetis Island is now permanently protected and marks the 100th protected place for the Islands Trust Fund.

The Islands Trust Fund, in partnership with the Cowichan Community Land Trust and the Thetis Island Nature Conservancy, has created a nature reserve to protect 21 hectares (52 acres) of Moore Hill. This conservation purchase was made possible thanks to the conservation vision of the previous land steward, the incredibly generous support of a local donor family and a grant from the federal Habitat Stewardship Program for Species at Risk. The property is certified as an Ecological Gift under Environment and Climate Change Canada's Ecological Gifts Program.

Moore Hill forms one of the highest peaks on Thetis Island and contains a rich mix of habitat types. The hill features dramatic sandstone cliffs. In places the cliffs have fractured into huge blocks, tumbling together to form caves that provide habitat for bats. Huge first growth Douglas-fir trees rise from the cliffs on the west side of the hill, and in small grassy openings camas, fritillaries and other wildflowers grow amongst the Garry oaks and arbutus. The eastern slope is a second growth Douglas-fir forest, with a diverse understory mosaic of mosses and ferns. This hill is culturally significant to First Nations people.

The Islands Trust Fund will carefully manage Moore Hill to ensure its ecological and archaeological features are monitored and maintained. Due to the steep cliff faces and its important species at risk habitat, Moore Hill will not be open to the public. The donors who made the protection of Moore Hill possible have made a tremendous contribution to the recovery of rare species and ecosystems on Thetis Island. Combined with the adjacent Nature Trust of BC reserve, protection of this property results in a 24 hectare protected area, spanning seashore to hilltop.

The Islands Trust Fund will work with the Thetis Island Nature Conservancy, the Cowichan Community Land Trust, First Nations, archaeologists and species at risk biologists to develop a comprehensive management plan to guide the care of this special place.

Our 100 Protected Places

- The 14 branches on the tree in the 100 Protected Places logo represent a protected place on each of the 13 local trust areas and Bowen Island Municipality that make up the Islands Trust Area. The tree's reflection in the water symbolizes the Salish Sea that connects us all.
- The first ITF property was protected in 1992; we reached 50 protected places in 2005 and 100 protected places in 2016.
- Our smallest nature reserve is 0.25 hectares (0.62 acres) on Gabriola Island – Coats Millstone Nature Reserve. This small nature reserve protects interesting historical features.
- Our largest nature reserve is 107 hectares (264 acres) on Gambier Island - Mount Artaban Nature Reserve. This large nature reserve protects maturing forests and the peak of Mount Artaban.
- In 2005, the Islands Trust Fund launched the Natural Area Protection Tax Exemption Program (NAPTEP) which offers a 65% property tax exemption. We now have 24 NAPTEP covenants protecting 77.54 hectares (191.6 acres).



Basil Franey speaks about the ecological values of Isabella Point with Gulf Islands Driftwood reporter Elizabeth Nolan. Insert: Hydrographic marker identifying Isabella Point, photo: C. Maslovat.

Isabella Point Covenant

A historic and much treasured Salt Spring south-end headland is now permanently protected by a voluntary conservation covenant.

Long-time Salt Spring Island resident Basil Franey worked with the Islands Trust Fund and Salt Spring Island Conservancy to protect this beautiful coastal property of maturing mixed conifer and woodland forests with rocky open bluffs in a voluntary conservation covenant. The land includes Douglas-fir, cedar, maple and arbutus trees, and provides habitat for several species at risk, most notably the Peregrine Falcon and Band-tailed Pigeon. Scientists have also located the federally endangered Sharp-tailed Snake nearby.

The property has a historic bronze survey marker for Isabella Point noted on Pacific marine charts and was previously the site of a one-room school house.

"I wanted to ensure the land would not be lost to development and be protected in perpetuity," says land steward Basil Franey. "The first thing that got me triggered to the idea of land conservation was when the landowner of Beaver Point donated lands adjacent to Ruckle Provincial Park to the province for protection 15 to 20 years ago. I thought what a nice thing to do and it planted a seed in my mind that stayed for many years."

The scarcity of publicly owned land on the islands means that private land stewards hold the key to protecting island ecosystems. By registering a conservation covenant and having it certified as an Ecological Gift, Basil is ensuring his commitment to ecosystem protection is tied to the land, long into the future. The Islands Trust Fund is grateful to Basil for his dedication to protecting Isabella Point and looks forward to working with other islanders who might be inspired by his initiative.



Conservation Covenants

Conservation covenants are placed permanently on the land title and require current as well as future landowners to protect the ecological features of a piece of land. The covenant holders are responsible for monitoring the covenants and ensuring that the restrictions are honoured. Contact the Islands Trust Fund to explore the possibility of a covenant on your land.



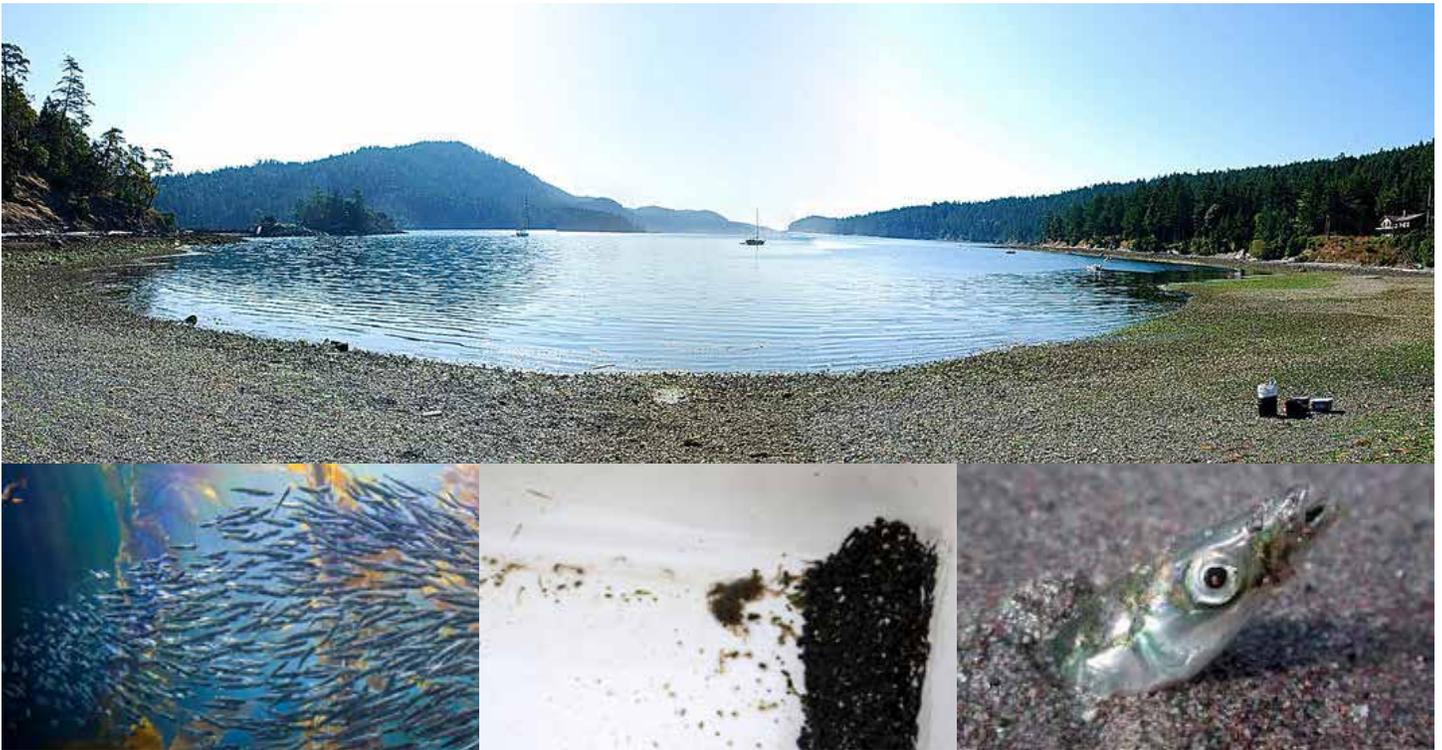
Protected Places in Partnership

The Islands Trust Fund and Salt Spring Island Conservancy cooperatively protect 12 special places on Salt Spring Island (approximately 109 hectares). Having more than one conservation covenant holder provides land stewards peace of mind that their gift will be protected and maintained forever.



Eco Gifts are Protected Forever

Canada's Ecological Gifts Program provides a way for Canadians with ecologically sensitive land to protect nature and leave a legacy for future generations. The federal Ecological Gifts program conveys important income and capital gains tax benefits for qualifying covenants and land donations. Please talk to a tax advisor or visit www.ec.gc.ca/pde-egp/ to learn more.



Top: Medicine Beach, North Pender Island, example of forage fish habitat, photo: D. Rippner, Pender Island Conservancy Association. Pictured left to right: Schooling adult forage fish, forage fish found at Medicine Beach shoreline survey, photo: D. Rippner, Pacific sand lance burrowed in the sand.

Caring for Our Shorelines Assessing and Mapping Forage Fish Habitat in the Islands

Forage fish are abundant, schooling fishes and include Pacific herring, anchovies, surf smelts and Pacific sand lance. These schooling fishes are an essential component of marine ecosystems as they are eaten by bigger fish. Forage fish depend on foreshore areas for food and shelter and many forage fish species spawn on spawn on local beaches with suitable habitat.

Forage fish spawning habitat can be easily damaged by shoreline development and contamination, which is why the Islands Trust Fund, in partnership with the Islands Trust and the BC Marine Conservation and Research Society, have surveyed beaches throughout the Salish Sea to assess the current status of our islands' forage fish spawning habitat. We focused particularly on mapping and assessing habitat for two types of forage fish: surf smelt and Pacific sand lance.

Surf smelt and Pacific sand lance spawn on sand and pebble beaches. They lay tiny eggs (approximately 1mm) on the upper beach near high tide levels, only a few metres below the log line. People can inadvertently damage spawning habitat when they build breakwaters, seawalls or docks. Spawning habitat can also be negatively affected by shellfish aquaculture. Land based oil leaks, or small but chronic oil spills from boats also have a negative impact to fragile forage fish eggs. Even digging and disturbance by pets can negatively disturb forage fish eggs.

Local forage fish are an important part of the diet of coastal cut-throat trout, and provide up to 50% of the diet of Chinook salmon. Chinook salmon just happen to be the favourite food for our beloved Southern Resident killer whales. Research from the Centre

for Whale Research in Washington State warns the Southern Resident killer whales are starving and on the brink of extinction. We need healthy local beaches if we are to have healthy killer whales.

By identifying shorelines where forage fish start their lives we help waterfront land stewards, governments, First Nations and conservation partners to take actions that keep beaches healthy. We've recently completed mapping of Lasqueti, Salt Spring, Valdes and Galiano Islands' shorelines:

www.IslandsTrustFund.bc.ca/ForageFish

Caring for Forage Fish Spawning Habitat

Does your property look out onto a gravel, pebble or sand beach? Tiny fish eggs may lie just below your feet. There are many steps you can take to make sure those eggs survive to support a healthy marine food web.

- Retain plants and trees near the shore
- Manage storm water runoff
- Maintain and operate boats responsibly
- Develop land carefully and use soft shore alternatives

There are better alternatives: <http://www.islandstrust.bc.ca/trust-council/projects/green-shores-for-homes/>



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"We are delighted to celebrate 100 protected places and the people who helped protect them. These special places are protected forever because islanders care. Each protected place and donor has their own unique story, but all are important to biodiversity on the islands."

Tony Law,
Chair of the Trust Fund Board.

Celebrating 100 Protected Places

Since 1990, islanders have entrusted the Islands Trust Fund with the responsibility to protect habitat on many well-loved islands places. As a land trust the Islands Trust Fund promises the land and covenants we receive are protected forever. This year we reached an important milestone of 100 Protected Places in the Trust Area, preserving over 1,190 hectares (2,941 acres) of diverse island ecosystems for future generations¹. We acknowledge with gratitude our partners, land stewards, other local land trusts and conservancies working on conservation in the islands. We recognize that our ability to preserve ecosystems is possible because the stewardship of the 37 First Nations with interests in the lands and waters in the Trust Area has left a lasting legacy of diverse ecosystems throughout the islands.

We think it is important to celebrate our progress and show that by working together we are making a difference. The Islands Trust Area is a beautiful, fragile region under ever-increasing pressures from development, habitat loss, climate change, sea level rise and invasive species. Islanders have responded to these pressures by donating their time, energy, land and money to save the places that give the islands their charm and contribute to their biological richness. Since 1990, islanders have worked with the Islands Trust Fund to voluntarily protect 958 hectares of ecologically significant land through conservation covenants (338 hectares) and land donations (620 hectares). An additional 232 hectares have been protected through requirements for development.

¹ The Islands Trust Fund now has 101 Protected Places with the addition of the Isabella Point Covenant, see page 2.



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While progress is being made in the conservation of island ecosystems, there is still much work to be done. Within the Islands Trust Area, there are a total of 149 red-listed (endangered) species (18% of the provincial total) and 153 blue-listed (threatened) species (19% of the provincial total). There are also 63 red-listed ecological communities and 48 blue-listed ecological communities². The Islands Trust Area supports some of Canada’s last remaining Garry Oak ecosystems and the associated rare plants, mosses, butterflies and reptiles. Fifteen federally-listed species at risk now have critical habitat identified in the Islands Trust Area. These rare and endangered species and ecosystems will not survive unless sufficient habitat is protected. The Islands Trust Fund is planning for the future by developing a new ten year Regional Conservation Plan and by continuing to support our partner organizations working to preserve the natural wonders on Canada’s Islands in the Salish Sea. For more information, please visit www.islandstrustfund.bc.ca.



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² The Islands Trust Area species at risk numbers were determined by search criteria that isolate species by biogeoclimatic zone and regional district. (BC Conservation Data Centre, 2016)

A Year of Celebration

1. Brooks Point Regional Park Covenant, South Pender
2. Trincomali Nature Sanctuary, Galiano
3. Coats Millstone Nature Reserve, Gabriola
4. David Otter Nature Reserve, Bowen
5. Fischer Covenant, Hornby
6. Frog Haven NAPTEP Covenant, Salt Spring
7. Horton Bayviary Nature Reserve, Mayne
8. South Winchelsea Island Covenant, Executive Islands Ballenas-Winchelsea
9. Medicine Beach Nature Sanctuary (E,HO), North Pender
10. Moore Hill Nature Reserve, Thetis
11. Morrison Marsh Nature Reserve, Denman
12. Mount Artaban Nature Reserve, Gambier
13. Mount Trematon Nature Reserve, Lasqueti
14. Strand-Dohan Covenant, Saturna



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Pictured left to right: Andy MacKinnon (retired biologist and forest ecologist) led a forest walk, Lisa Gordon (retired Islands Trust Director) generously donated her retirement gift, Ruby Eliason, (age 7) peered through a cedar tree root, and Matthias Bannister (age 7) donated his birthday money, photo: K. Bannister.

100 Protected Places – and counting! Final Push to Save Fairyslipper Forest Forever!

In 2014, the Thetis Island Nature Conservancy (ThINC), the Cowichan Community Land Trust and the Islands Trust Fund began fundraising to protect a 16 hectare (40 acre) property on Thetis Island's lower Burchell Hill, named after the fairyslipper orchids (*Calypto bulbosa*) that dot the forest floor every spring.

Now, in the final stages of the campaign, we are thrilled to inform you that we have called in pledges and are very close to raising the \$560,000 needed to acquire Fairyslipper Forest. This means we are closer than ever to reaching our goal to protect this rare growth Coastal Douglas-fir forest on Thetis Island. One final fundraising push is needed to make this community dream a reality.

Fairyslipper Forest is home to species-at-risk such as the Common Nighthawk (*Chordeiles minor*) and the Northern Red-legged Frog (*Rana aurora*). Further biological surveys of the land this spring

uncovered another rare species, Ozette Coralroot (*Corallorhiza maculata* var. *ozettensis*). With the help of a few more generous donations, they will forever have a safe place to call home.

Thank you for supporting nature conservation in the Salish Sea. Please join us in the final fundraising effort to protect Fairyslipper Forest forever!



Rare and/or charismatic wildflowers found in Fairyslipper Forest.

Regional Conservation Planning – Planning for the Future

The Islands Trust Fund's work is guided by the Regional Conservation Plan, a science-based plan that identifies, prioritizes and plans for the protection of the best of the islands' natural spaces. We've created this plan to focus our efforts and resources on what's most urgently in need of protection.

Our current plan expires at the end of 2017, so throughout this year we are reaching out to experts, partners, the public and the 37 First Nations with interests in the lands and waters in the Islands Trust Area to develop a new ten-year Regional Conservation Plan (2018-2027).

To maximize protection for our biodiversity priorities, we're working with our partners to develop new conservation goals. We will be reaching out to the public with the draft plan in late 2017 and early 2018. To learn more and stay up to date, visit: <http://www.islandstrustfund.bc.ca/initiatives/planning-for-conservation.aspx>



Feedback from our partners indicates conservation priorities moving forward.

Managing Protected Areas

Legally protecting land is only the first step in conservation. The Islands Trust Fund promises to protect land entrusted to us in perpetuity. Part of that promise means ensuring the ecological integrity of protected places is never lost. The Islands Trust Fund recently adopted a Property Management Strategy to guide how we care for our protected places - so we can keep our promise to you, and to nature.

The Islands Trust Fund partners with local conservancies, stewards, volunteers and specialists to care for and restore protected places. The Islands Trust Fund and our partners have been busy completing restoration, planting and other management activities:

Kwel Nature Reserve, Lasqueti Island

On October 2, 2016, Lasqueti Island Nature Conservancy (LINC) board members and volunteers finished the Kwel Nature Reserve clean-up, clearing out and removing debris from an abandoned 'gardening' operation. A full-size pick-up truck of tarps, buckets and garbage were removed.

When asked about the day, LINC board member and volunteer Gordon Scott said, "We have a great relationship with the Islands Trust Fund and appreciate the help with the clean-up, it's very valuable and worthwhile." The Islands Trust Fund sincerely thanks LINC board members and volunteers for their efforts!



Lasqueti Island Nature Conservancy (LINC) directors and volunteers clean up Kwel Nature Reserve. Pictured: Marie-Ange Fall along with LINC Directors Andrew Fall, Wendy Schneible and Barb Brooks, photo: G. Scott.

Mount Tuam Protected Area Covenant, Salt Spring Island

This spring, Salt Spring Island Conservancy staff found a female Sharp-tailed Snake (*Contia tenuis*) under snake boards set up at the Mount Tuam Protected Area. Sharp-tailed Snakes are found in pockets of Coastal Douglas-fir and Arbutus forest on Vancouver Island and the Gulf Islands. Secluded south facing rocky slopes appear to be critical habitat, providing both hibernacula (a place to seek refuge) and egg-laying sites. Snake boards were installed to assist in monitoring for this elusive species which seeks shade from the intense summer heat. It seems the snakes love this protected area, because on May 4, 2017, three more Sharp-tailed Snakes were found on site!



The 13 hectares of Garry-oak meadow and rocky outcrops near the summit of Mount Tuam are a rare haven for some of the province's most at-risk species. Pictured: Sharp-tailed Snake, found April 18, 2017, photo: L. Matthias, Salt Spring Island Conservancy.

Long Bay Wetland and Brigade Bay Bluffs Nature Reserves, Gambier Island

Restoration work is ongoing on the Long Bay Wetland Nature Reserve, a 38-hectare Trust Fund Board (TFB) property on Gambier Island, covenanted by the Gambier Island Conservancy (GIC) and the Sunshine Coast Conservation Association (SCCA). The restoration plan, initiated in 2013, is to regenerate areas impacted by a gravel pit and logging by seeding, planting and protecting native trees.

To ensure the survival of native seedlings, volunteers from GIC, SCCA and the Brigade Bay Homeowners Association have protected young cedar trees with wooden stakes and protective wire caging to prevent deer grazing. In a spring 2016 work party, GIC volunteers returned to the area and happily reported a high seedling survival rate for caged trees.

Now that a number of trees are starting to grow naturally in the gravel pit, efforts have moved on to reforesting some of the logged areas, including along the Sea Ranch trail through the Long Bay Wetland Nature Reserve and the lower portion of the Brigade Bay Bluffs Nature Reserve. Our ambitious and hardworking stewardship partners at GIC planted 0.25 hectares of Brigade Bay with native plants and installed caging for deer protection. It was a successful day and the Gambier Island environment is richer for their efforts.



Tree planting in the Brigade Bay Bluffs Reserve on Gambier Island. Left to right: Gambier Island Conservancy (GIC) volunteers Peter Klassen, Boris Gorgitza (Board member, GIC), Paul Kadota, Doug Hopwood (Forester/Contractor), Ruth Simons and Caitlin Woods.

Support island habitats.

Donate today.

Our 100% Promise

When you donate to the Islands Trust Fund, every dollar of your donation goes directly to protecting endangered island habitats.

All donations of \$20 or more will receive a tax receipt for Canadian income tax purposes. All donations of \$200 or more will receive a small gift in token of our appreciation. The Islands Trust Fund is a qualified donee under the *Income Tax Act*.

Save time! Donate online!

<http://www.islandstrustfund.bc.ca/donate.aspx>

YES! I want to help protect natural habitat on the islands

\$50 \$100 \$250 \$ _____

Please designate my donation to: Where most needed

Opportunity Fund Covenant Management and Defence Fund

Lasqueti Island Acquisition Fund Gambier Island Acquisition Fund

Fairyslipper Forest (Thetis Island Acquisition Fund)

Name _____

Address _____

City _____

Prov/State _____ Postal/Zip code _____

Phone _____

E-mail _____

Yes, I am okay with public recognition of my donation.

I wish to donate by:

cheque (made payable to the Islands Trust Fund)

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Card number _____

Expiry Date _____

Security Code (back of card) _____

Signature _____

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Male Western Screech-Owl (*Megascops kennicottii*) caught on camera during a Link Island baseline, photo: R. Ferguson.

Thank you for your support!

This past year, individuals and organizations helped the Islands Trust Fund reach an important milestone in protecting rare ecosystems, habitat and species at risk in 100 protected places. You make this success possible.

A perfect gift for someone passionate about the islands!

We would like to thank the numerous individuals and organizations that help the Islands Trust Fund protect rare ecosystems and habitat. Your contributions to the work we do are greatly appreciated.

As a token of our appreciation, all donations of \$200 or more will receive a new Harbour Publishing Pacific Field Guide to the Pacific Northwest, including guides to common fishes, seaweeds, sea stars, trees, medicinal wild plants and more.

Donate annually and collect them all!



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