



I've called Salt Spring home for a long time. I bought property on Isabella Point Road—when much of the road was still unpaved—after a couple years caretaking for a neighbour, who generously offered to carry a mortgage for a 20-something student with almost no income. That once-scruffy lot is now a garden paradise that provides a year's worth of organic fruit and vegetables for my household and many months of nectar for native bees.

For most of my working life, I've been professional musician, in addition to teaching at the University of Victoria in the School of Music and writing for the Globe and Mail. My career often took me on tour and to Australia, where I was an artist in residence at the University of New England for a semester each year. I've worked with numerous ensembles in Toronto, most regularly with the Tafelmusik Orchestra, with whom I performed for over 20 years. These provided useful life skills: Ensemble playing is all about working together, and a serious teacher soon learns to speak clearly and to listen with respect.

Most recently I've been active in attempting to conserve a large acreage in the south end of the island. That project, which is still ongoing, has involved raising almost \$250,000 in donations, and it has put me into contact with many wonderful people whose incredible expertise in forestry, wetland management, species diversity and habitat conservation has been an inspiration. Through this project I've come to a better understanding of the hurdles facing conservationists, the tradeoffs involved, the fragility of the ecosystems on our island, and the need to ensure that the Island Trust's mandate to protect the environment—its very reason for being—is honoured with more than lip service.

I've watched climate change and habitat loss here first hand for over 40 years: the decline of robust forests, the lengthening summer droughts and winter floods, the unpredictable temperature fluctuations. I remember the once-common call of Western screech owls in the meadow in front of my cabin; flocks of barn swallows arriving to roost in spring; pods of whales regularly traversing the strait, fishing boats with plentiful sockeye. All this is mostly gone now.

It's not impossible to preserve what remains. It's also not impossible to meet the many challenges that face the island—the lack of affordable housing, family doctors and workers, to name a few—but lets do it in a way that respects the natural world, the reason most of us live here, as an integral and necessary of our community's health. We can do this if we have a Trust that acts passionately, consistently, and effectively.

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