



the Steward

Volume 10 Number 2

Newsletter of the Whatcom Land Trust, Bellingham Washington

Summer 2000

A PARK FOR THE NOOKSACK EAGLES

By Rand Jack

Promoted and protected by The Nature Conservancy's eagle reserve, the eagles of the Skagit River have become famous. Less well known is the fact that, according to recent counts, wintering eagles on the Nooksack River match those on the Skagit bird for bird. Apparently, Skagit eagles just have a better public relations agent.

Whatcom County does not even have a place designated for public eagle watching. That is about to change thanks to a generous gift from Hank and Lorrell Rensink. They have given Whatcom Land Trust 33 acres of prime eagle watching property along the Truck Road behind Carol's Coffee Cup. In the late Fall of 2000 the Land Trust will open the Deming Homestead Eagle Park bordering the North

Deming Homestead Eagle Park

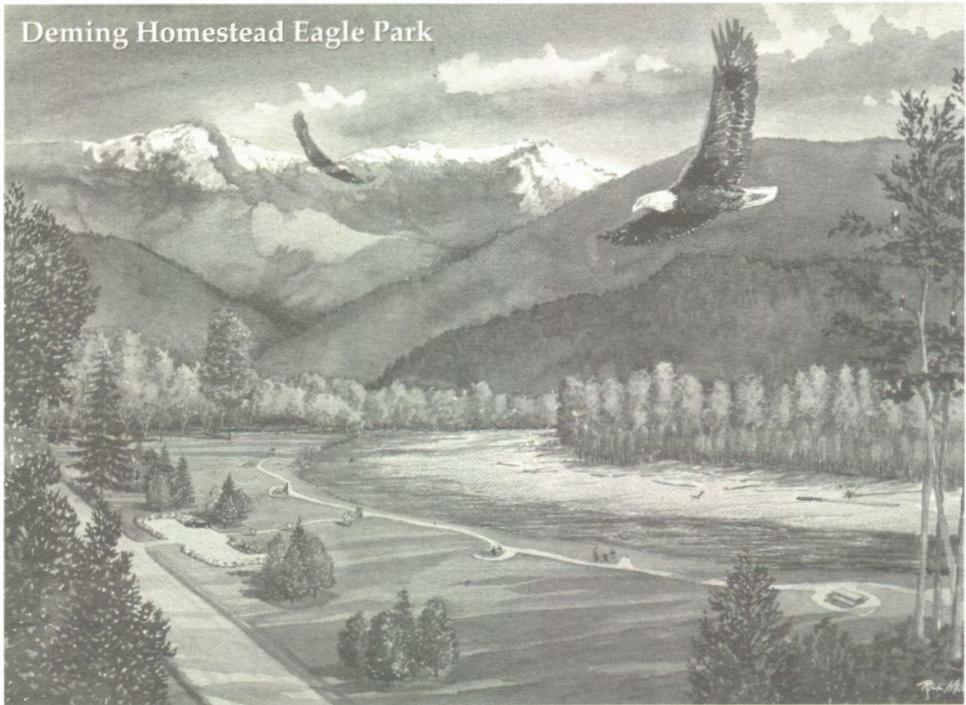


illustration by Richard Mullen

Fork of the Nooksack on part of the old Deming homestead.

When Hank was a senior at Mt. Baker High School in 1961, he was required to write a paper on a city or town in Washington for his State history class. Rather than looking to far away places like Tacoma or Spokane, he decided to write about something close to home - Deming. His teacher, Chester Baker, suggested that students write to the Chamber of Commerce in the town they had selected, but, of course, Deming had no Chamber of Commerce. So, Hank turned to Deming's keepers of the local lore. In

postmaster Harold Woolf, Hank struck gold.

To Hank's great surprise, Harold revealed that Hank was living on the old Deming Homestead and that the first Deming Post Office had been in Hank's front yard. Hank's interest in Deming turned into fascination. His folks had bought the place in 1938; ten years later, his dad Peter traded five cows for the beautifully wooded acre where the original post office once stood. E. W. Owen, the first postmaster in these parts, was appointed in 1889 and named the post office Deming after the man from whom he had bought his homestead. The town of Deming was eventually situated two miles down the river and the post

continued on page four



photo courtesy of Rand Jack

Hank Rensink in front of his park donation

Staff

Thank You to Departing Office Manager, Tina Mirable

After seven months of service, Tina has left Whatcom Land Trust to pursue her interest in biological field work. She is currently working in Southwest Washington, where she is documenting populations of marbled murrelets. Whatcom Land Trust is grateful for her hard work and wishes her the best of luck.

Jessica Raley Joins the Land Trust as Office Manager

Jessica comes to Whatcom Land Trust from the Opportunity Council, where she engaged in grant writing, donor database management, newsletter production and a variety of public relations support activities. Jessica earned her degree in Women Studies and Political Economics at Fairhaven College and is currently attending Whatcom Community College's Graphic Design program. She is pleased to have joined such a committed and inspiring group of folks, and is looking forward to doing her part to preserve Whatcom County's unique natural heritage.

New Membership Campaign Coordinator, Laura Pitts

Laura brings to Whatcom Land Trust expertise in community outreach from six years' experience directing public programs for environmental and community leadership non-profits in Silicon Valley, CA. Educated at Brown University, she brings professional experience as a writer and teacher of writing, as well. Laura lives in Sudden Valley, where looking out through the Douglas firs to Lake Whatcom each morning reminds her how lucky she is to work on behalf of this beautiful land and its residents of all species.

Volunteers

Many thanks to all the wonderful volunteers who help us out in so many ways.

Volunteers Needed

If you've helped with Whatcom Land Trust newsletter and fund raising mailings in the past, or if you're interested in folding and stuffing for a good cause, we'd love to hear from you. Contact Jessica at 360-650-9470 for more information.

Volunteer Profile Rand Jack

by Bob Keller



photo courtesy of Gordon Scott

Rand Jack planting trees on the Craver property.

"The guy's a legal genius," attorney Dean Brett said of his associate Rand Jack. Everyone at Whatcom Land Trust would agree - except we'd say that the genius lies in negotiating land deals and achieving goals through an exceptional capacity for finding creative ways around seemingly impossible obstacles. Rand Jack's other qualities include perseverance, focus, his intense land ethic and a contagious zest for life.

Rand came to Bellingham from a large Seattle law firm in 1970 at my invitation to teach at Fairhaven College at Western Washington University. Over the years, in what could be called

his free time, he has built his own home, raised two children, trained himself in wood carving, and helped found Whatcom Land Trust. As an attorney and professor, he won several major lawsuits (including the San Juan jet ski case), worked with Trillium in Chile, published a book on legal ethics, created the Law & Diversity Program at Western, and traveled in Europe, Africa and South America. Three years ago he traversed Alaska's Brooks Range by foot and canoe.

Rand holds high expectations for students. A college education, he would say, above all involves asking the right questions, recognizing sound answers, and thinking about one's purposes on earth. His remarkable wildlife sculptures, one of his many purposes, have won awards and been purchased by Hollywood stars.

Yet Rand's most lasting contribution to Whatcom County has come through Whatcom Land Trust: the Chuckanut land exchange, Squires Lake Park, Clark's Point, the Nessel Farm, Canyon Lake Creek Community Forest, and a dozen other local conservation properties, including his own land at Van Zandt. In recognition of this legacy, the Whatcom County Parks Foundation recently honored Rand with their William J. Dittrich Award for Leadership.

In September, Rand and his wife Dana leave for her 10-month Fulbright appointment in Nepal. We shall miss him. But we know he will be back, more determined than ever.

The Mission of the Whatcom Land Trust is to preserve and protect wildlife habitat, scenic, agricultural and open space lands in Whatcom County for future generations by securing interests in land and promoting land stewardship.

Newsletter Editorial Team Rod Burton, Jessica Raley
Design and Layout Donated by Roderick C. Burton - Art & Design
Contributors to this issue Rand Jack, Bob Keller, Laura Pitts,
Gordon Scott, Jessica Raley

SAVING THE FOREST AND THE TREES

By Rand Jack

Thanks to a generous anonymous donation of \$500,000, Whatcom Land Trust was able to join with Whatcom County to save the beautiful, mature forest on the 235 acres adjoining the Nessel Farm to the north. The forest spans over a mile of the South Fork of the Nooksack River; a stream winds through the woods between the river and a complex of ponds. In addition to large stands of second-growth Douglas fir, the forest is made of a rich texture of moss-covered maple trees, tall pointed cedars, sculpted vine maples, scaly ancient spruce trees by the ponds, a handful of rutted old growth Douglas fir, and alders and cottonwoods on the gravel bars by the river.

This is vital habitat for Whatcom Land Trust's SEE (Salmon, Eagle, Elk) Project. On a winter day, all three species can be seen along the river. Even when the elk themselves are not visible, hoof prints on the sandbars and forest trail are constant witness to their presence. We call this property the Overby Farm in remembrance of the last family to live there 50 years ago.

During the Depression, counties foreclosed on parcels of clear-cut timberland because of unpaid taxes. Since the counties did not have facilities to manage the land, the legislature required them to turn it over to the State Department of Natural Resources (DNR), where it was known as Forest Board Transfer Land. The legislature also provided that a county could request the reconveyance of this land to the county for use as a park.

Acquisition of the Overby Farm was an essential part of the Nessel Farm Park project the Land Trust has been working on for over ten years. Unfortunately, it was not Forest Board Transfer Land, but rather, was owned by Goodyear Nelson Timber Company. Working with the Land Trust, Whatcom County asked DNR to obtain the Overby Farm from Goodyear Nelson, perform an internal trade within the agency to convert it to Forest Board Transfer Land, and then



photo courtesy of Rand Jack

Russ Pfeiffer-Hoyt, 1998 Land Steward of the Year, walks through the recently purchased forest.

convey it to the County for a park. Again unfortunately, DNR acquired, traded and conveyed the Overby Farm to Whatcom County to become a park, but left Goodyear Nelson with the right to cut most of the trees. And thus, we were faced with the prospect of a 235-acre stump park.

In negotiations with Whatcom Land Trust and Whatcom County Parks, Goodyear Nelson agreed to sell the timber rights they retained for \$1,250,000. To save the forest, the Land Trust obtained a grant of \$500,000 and the County Council agreed to contribute \$750,000 from the Conservation Futures Fund. Some Council members wanted to allow selective logging on the property, but our anonymous donor had made very clear to us the intent to save the forest and the trees - all of the trees. Faced with this clear intent, the Council agreed. The Land Trust now holds a conservation easement on the Overby Farm assuring that this intent will be honored. In a sense the donor saved the forest twice - once through the monetary donation and again through insisting that it be used to save the forest and the trees.

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office moved to that location in 1897. The Deming Homestead did not become the town Deming because only the Milwaukee Railroad passed through the homestead along what is now the Truck Road, while the Mil-



photo courtesy of Rand Jack

Sculpture now; salmon habitat-to-be.

waukee and the Northern Pacific met at the future town site. And that's how the Deming Homestead Eagle Park got its name and how Hank got an "A" in Washington State history.

When the Nooksack began to eat away at the Deming Homestead riverbank south of the Truck Road, Whatcom County engineers devised a flood control project to protect the road. Because public funds cannot be used to protect private property, the Rensinks faced a dilemma - leave the County to build its protective wall next to the road and risk their property washing away or donate the land to become a park. Fortunately for all of us, they chose a park given in memory of Hank's parents, Peter and Martha Rensink.

At our first meeting, Hank and I stood next to the Truck Road and watched the river pound at the bank of his lush field of clover. When I asked him what kind of park he wanted it to be, he said "maybe something with soccer fields." With the rushing river and the trees and the hillsides, this didn't seem quite right. About that time an eagle swooped into a nearby cottonwood. "What about an eagle watching park?" I asked. Hank lit up. "That would be fine."

Not until I went into his house several months later did I understand why it had been such an easy decision. Lorrell and Hank's home is filled with eagle pictures of every imaginable sort. The welcome sign by the door is capped with a soaring eagle. Hank's son baked an eagle on



photo courtesy of Hank Rensink

Hank's 50th birthday cake.

his dad's 50th birthday cake. Even their front yard wishing well has an eagle perched in it. Lorrell joked that Hank had a drawer full of eagle hats and T-shirts. The eagles of the Nooksack have been so much a part of Hank's life that it took him a moment to realize that oth-

ers needed a special place set aside to watch the eagles.

To protect Truck Road, and incidentally the eagle park, County engineers dug a 1400 foot crescent-shaped ditch 15 feet deep and about that wide. They filled the ditch with giant rocks, set to await the encroaching river. Halfway through construction, the Washington State Fish and Wildlife Department decided that the buried rock wall would not be good salmon habitat if and when the river reached it. They required the County to devise a habitat mitigation plan as a condition of completing the rock-filled trench. If you drive down the Truck Road, you will see seven great piles of logs, root balls and olivine boulders bound together with thick chains. Placed between the river and the buried rock wall, the engineer's sculptures are supposed to drop into the river as the bank erodes. There they are to collect woody debris floating down the Nooksack, forming protective habitat for salmon and maybe keeping the river from reaching the sterile buried rip rap. Thus we have an eagle park, and the engineers have an experiment in trying to manage the river.

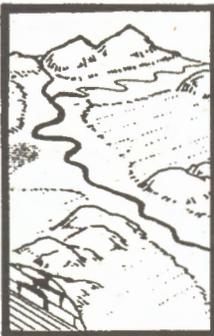
Deming Homestead Eagle Park

We need your help to open this park.

We need donations to purchase:

- One Large Display Sign* **\$1,500**
- One Interpretive Sign* **\$500 ea.**
- One Picnic Table* **\$500 ea.**

Donors will be recognized on any article they purchase, and are fully tax-deductible. To make a donation,



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photo courtesy of Rand Jack

Eagles along the Nooksack, awaiting the salmon.

Land Trust Gets Salmon Recovery Grant

On March 17 the Governor's Salmon Recovery Funding Board announced a grant to the Whatcom Land Trust for the acquisition and restoration of critical Chinook salmon habitat on the South Fork Nooksack River near Acme. The project, entitled South Fork Chinook, will acquire about 250 acres of stream habitat, wetlands, side channels and floodplain along the best natural meandering reach of the river. Upstream of the project area the river flows in a narrow valley with few stable off-channel sloughs. Down stream, flood control dikes confine the river. Since 1938, 86% of the off-channel habitat in the South Fork has been con-

verted to farmland, and the total length of the river has been reduced by 37%. The project site is located adjacent to the County's Nessel Farm Park and will add to the habitat value of that land. The project includes restoration of natural hydrologic functions through placement of engineered logjams and streamside planting. Lummi Nation, Department of Ecology, United States Fish and Wildlife Service, Whatcom County Parks and the Whatcom Land Trust are all cooperating on this project. The project site is ideal for acquisition and protection because it is located in the most strategic naturally functioning reach of the South Fork.

20,000 Trees Planted on Craver Property

Whatcom Land Trust's first comprehensive restoration project achieved a major milestone this year with the completion of tree planting on forest land donated to the Trust in 1999 by Ernie Craver of Mosquito Lake Road. As part of our obligation to Ernie for donating his land, the Land Trust facilitated the replanting of 60 acres that had previously been high-grade logged and left unplanted by a logging contractor who later went bankrupt. Because of the overgrown nature of the property, the Land Trust first hired a local logging contractor, Kerry Thalhofer of Acme, to clear planting spots of brush and slash. Once the site preparation was complete the Land Trust contracted with Bill Hatley,

owner of Cascade Reforestation out of Concrete, to plant the cleared ground. Bill's crew worked for five days planting 20,000 two-year-old Douglas fir trees. Because the selective nature of the previous logging favored Douglas fir, a diverse mix of tree species and age classes was left on the site. Hemlock, cedar, spruce, alder, cherry, birch and maple are scattered throughout the property. Our tree planting project reforested areas that were bare of any trees, and the planting of Douglas fir species will help restore the natural diversity of the new forest. Funding for the project was provided by a grant from American Forests Global ReLeaf Program. Crown Pacific of Hamilton generously donated all 20,000 trees.

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Three Benches	\$300 ea.
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GAP Conservation Analysis Completed

There are many aspects to a successful conservation program, including having the best scientific information at your fingertips in order to analyze wildlife habitats. This spring Whatcom Land Trust completed an analysis of habitat needs and current levels of protection for salmon, eagles and elk in Whatcom County. Terra Logic, an environmental consulting firm from Stanwood, worked with the Land Trust to identify and map the known habitat needs for these three species as well as map properties that are currently managed for habitat protection or held by the public as recreation lands. This mapping exercise indicated areas for future conservation efforts. This project determined the most important habitat feature in the County is the Nooksack River, from the

estuary at Marietta to the Forks at Deming, upstream to Glacier on the North Fork and the Middle Fork Confluence, and down past Saxon on the South Fork

One interesting finding of the project revealed that cities and other urban areas occupy about 5.25% of the landscape in Western Whatcom County. Private land is the predominate type of ownership in the county, amounting to 81% of the non-federal land area. Within this category, timber companies constitute the largest private landowners in the county with 12% of the land base. The amount of land in conservation status, including city, county, state parks, The Nature Conservancy and Whatcom Land Trust, amount to just 1.5% of the total land area.

Partnership Acquires North Fork Wetlands

This spring Whatcom Land Trust acquired an important wetland parcel along the North Fork of the Nooksack River near Glacier. As part of a United States Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) wetland protection grant, Whatcom Land Trust, the Department of Ecology and the Lummi Nation joined together to acquire and restore 44 acres of stream and wetland habitat. The property will be managed solely for salmon enhancement and

habitat conservation, and is not open for public access. The new acquisition includes a 5-acre spring-fed wetland and about 1,300 feet of North Fork River frontage. Wood ducks, mergansers, and other waterfowl frequent the site, as well as bald eagles. Several intact side channels along the south bank of the river carry floodwaters and provide quiet, clean habitat for small salmon smolts. Vegetation on the property is predominately alder

Volunteers Help Keep The Trust Going

Brandy Hake was an invaluable intern at the Land Trust this spring. She helped facilitate the transition between an outgoing and incoming Office Manager, skillfully picking up a variety of projects and duties on short notice. Thanks, Brandy! You were really there when we needed you.

A group of Western students took on improving Whatcom Land Trust's website as a class Service Learning Project. While the results are not implemented yet, we are appreciative of the time and effort given by Jennifer Newman, Jessica Wigg, Matt Jaffe, Gabriel Martin and Bjorn Townsend. Check in at www.whatcomland.com for new developments!

Call us at (360) 650-9470 to discuss your interests and hear more about volunteer opportunities.

and cottonwood. In order to improve habitat diversity, the Lummi Nation Natural Resources Department planted about 15 acres of the property with Western red cedar and grand fir. Over time, these trees will grow up and provide valuable shade for the wetlands and the river. Eventually these conifers will fall into the Nooksack and help restore some of the complex stream diversity necessary for long-term survival of salmon.

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COMMUNITY CORNER

By Laura Pitts

We're Growing!

Member by Member, Neighbor to Neighbor

With this newsletter, we invite you to reach out through a special campaign welcoming new members to Whatcom Land Trust. Thanks to a generous grant from the Whatcom Community Foundation, we can now bring our message of community stewardship to citizens throughout our county.

Our vision is to give every resident of Whatcom County the opportunity to protect the lands they love. And our hope is that our membership will grow neighbor to neighbor in the same way we accomplish all our goals here at Whatcom Land Trust.

This season, we're encouraging all our supporters to reach out to friends, neighbors, and colleagues, extending them an invitation to learn more about the Trust.

Our volunteers, board members, and committees are putting together a host of activities that you can attend with your friends to introduce them to Land Trust people and programs. And we're updating our brochures, exhibits, and general outreach materials, adding a variety of fact sheets and a guide to parks and preserves affiliated with Whatcom Land Trust. By midsummer we should have all the new support materials and a schedule of events ready to support you in talking with your friends, neighbors and colleagues about Whatcom Land Trust. Call us at (360) 650-9470 with questions and ideas.

The Perfect Time to Become a Member

And we've made it easy for you: just use the return envelope enclosed in this issue to let us know you're joining our community of stewardship, preserving the spaces and species you love.

P.S. Don't forget, with your membership contribution, all Whatcom Land Trust activities are FREE! That includes our Annual Members' Celebration, educational forums, the dedication and opening of Deming Homestead Eagle Park, and your complementary subscription to *The Steward* newsletter.

Contact Whatcom Land Trust by calling the office at (360) 650-9470 or e-mailing wltrust@nas.com

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photo courtesy of Gordon Scott

Whatcom Land Trust Member Lesley Rigg enthusiastically removes harvest tags in celebration of saving the Overby Forest. (see story on page 3.)

Our Outreach & Membership committee will be thriving this season, so expect to hear from us!

Member Volunteers Promote Stewardship

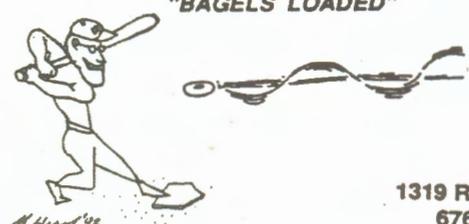
If you're a member who'd like to get more involved with Whatcom Land Trust, the moment is now!

With outreach activities and events we'll be opening up a variety of new volunteer opportunities, from hike guides to publicity writers to party-planners and community educators.

If you're ready to take a new step for stewardship, give us a call or drop us an e-mail with your name, contact information, and areas of interest/expertise. As opportunities arise (midsummer through late autumn), we'll contact you for screening and available volunteer positions. Reach us at (360) 650-9470 or wltrust@nas.com.

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Rensink Donation

A Park for Eagles



photo courtesy of Lee Mann

Celebrate with the Trust
Deming Homestead Eagle Park Dedication
July 29, 2000 at 11:00 a.m.
Head out the Mt. Baker Highway (exit 255)
Go .4 miles past the Sedro Woolley/Hwy 9 turn-off
Turn right on Truck Road, the park is on the right.

**ANNUAL MEMBER'S
CELEBRATION IN
SEPTEMBER**

The Whatcom Land Trust Annual Membership Celebration will be held at the Fairhaven Park picnic area from 3-6 p.m. on Sunday, September 24. The Land Steward of the Year and Distinguished Conservator Awards will be presented at 3 p.m. Following, we will highlight important land conservation achievements which have been made possible through the support of our members. Delicious local food will be served.

Bring a Friend

Members are invited to bring a friend who might be interested in joining the Trust. Watch for your personalized invitation!