

The



Newsletter of Whatcom Land Trust
Whatcom County, Washington

Steward

Whatcom Land Trust: Preserving the *Nature* of Whatcom County since 1984

Volume 21 Number 1

Spring 2012

Preserving, Protecting & Restoring Salmon and their Habitat on the North Fork of the Nooksack River

Eric Carabba

Whatcom Land Trust's salmon habitat preserves are growing on the North Fork of the Nooksack River. WLT has been hard at work along the North Fork securing conservation interests in strategic locations that support an ongoing salmon recovery effort. These actions provide important habitat for many creatures.

Whatcom Land Trust closed 2011 with the purchase of 60 acres of prime salmon habitat near Glacier. Over the last year and a half, the Land Trust worked with the Steiner family to purchase 39 acres adjacent to the 230-acre Steiner Preserve, thus forming the 269-acre Wildcat Reach Salmon Preserve.

Last summer Nooksack Tribe Natural Resources was busy working in this reach of the river installing engineered log jams to provide channel stability and to accelerate the formation of forested channel islands. Acquisition, complemented by these habitat restoration actions, will provide protection of these lands



North Fork Eagle Preserve - Miller Property: Whatcom Land Trust preserves dynamic riverfront so that natural processes can promote habitat diversity and species abundance.

and allow natural processes to support habitat diversity, key habitat quantity, and channel stability, which ...continued on page four

Ladies of the Lake Restoration

Steve Walker



Ladies of the Lake: Kokanee run in Fir Creek.

The year 2012 brings the initiation of Whatcom Land Trust's effort to restore natural conditions to a degraded section of Fir Creek in the Lake Whatcom watershed. Relatively unknown, Fir Creek originates on 2,414-foot Anderson Mountain in Skagit County and cascades down a steep canyon in a series of waterfalls, until it reaches the valley floor below. There, it flows along the edge of agricultural land, parallel to the better-known Anderson Creek, which is visible along Park Road. The Land Trust's 101-acre Ladies of the Lake Preserve ...continued on page six



Welcome Briana

Briana Berkowitz is Whatcom Land Trust's 2011-2012 AmeriCorps Volunteer Coordinator. She hails from Madison, Wisconsin, and is ecstatic to now live somewhere with both mountains and the sea. A 2011 graduate of Beloit College with degrees in environmental geology and modern languages, her undergraduate career took her to the Caribbean to study French, to Mongolia to map moraines, and to Illinois for a stewardship internship at a wetland preserve. That last experience is what inspired her to further pursue the field of land conservation.

Briana is thoroughly enjoying all aspects of her position, spreading WLT's mission at outreach events, meeting volunteers, and especially getting out on the land and doing restoration work. When not at WLT, she can be found biking around town, practicing viola and ukulele, and traveling as much as possible. Goals for the future include getting a master's degree in geography, joining the Peace Corps, and living in a lighthouse.

Jennifer Wright Joins WLT Board of Directors and is Elected Treasurer

Jennifer Wright found Whatcom County from one of the farthest reaches within the continental US: south Florida. After one visit to Bellingham, she and her husband Damien knew where they wanted to raise their children. As avid adventurers, they spend their free time exploring the natural landscapes and trails of Whatcom County and the Cascades. Jennifer enjoys all the outdoor recreation Whatcom County has to offer: hiking, backpacking, mountain biking, rock climbing, kayaking, and snowboarding.



Jennifer Wright

She is excited and honored to take an active role in preserving and protecting the open space and agricultural lands of Whatcom County for our future generations through Whatcom Land Trust. Jennifer holds both undergraduate and graduate degrees from Florida Atlantic University in accounting and taxation, respectively. Jennifer is a CPA at the local public accounting firm of Metcalf Hodges.

Jennifer has been attending board meetings for a year while learning the details of the role of Treasurer under the tutelage of WLT's wonderful former Treasurer, Harte Bressler.

Thank You, Harte Bressler!

Ardent mountain lover and Certified Public Accountant extraordinaire, Harte Bressler, will be stepping down as Whatcom Land Trust Treasurer this March.

While most might know Harte for his excellence in financial matters, he is also an accomplished mountain climber who has climbed most of the major mountains in the Pacific Northwest and enjoyed numerous expeditions to the Denali Range and Juneau Icefield in Alaska. This deep love of the great outdoors likely fueled Harte's incredible generosity to WLT over the years. "Harte's contributions to the success of the organization have been enormous, both in the area of financial management and in the thoughtful, intelligent good judgment with which he has helped guide us" shared Rand Jack, fellow WLT Board member. One way or another, Harte's fingerprints are on every WLT achievement completed since he joined the board. These achievements are part of his sterling legacy of service to our community. While we are saddened by his resignation as a member of the Board of Directors, we are also happy to free Harte up to spend more time playing in the mountains. As Harte leaves the board, he carries our greatest respect, highest regard and warmest affection.

Color Pictures!

We are now able to have the *Steward* printed in full color. Thanks to the generosity of Business Partner, Lithtex NW, this isn't a significant cost over the previous two-color printing, and gives our supporters a better image of the lands we protect.

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Mary Dumas, Bob Keller, Craig Lee, Steve Walker, Jennifer Wright

President's Message

Mary Dumas

Whatcom Land Trust has been very successful at conserving Whatcom County's signature landscapes and sensitive places thanks to tremendous community support, partnerships with local, state and federal agencies and enormous volunteer commitment. We're indebted to the volunteers and supporters who bring our mission to life in hundreds of amazing ways:

The Accreditation Volunteers:

Alan Fritzberg, Rand Jack, Jayme Curley, Carl Prince, Lori Anderson, Katy Batchelor, Natalie Whitman, Rebecca Reich, Traci Klineman, Ingrid Taylor, Lynne Givler, Rod Burton and Sue Hindman.

These generous volunteers contributed countless hours helping WLT clean out 25 years of files (and closets) to prepare WLT's Accreditation Application to the Land Trust Alliance. Our application review is scheduled for late March 2012; see the Summer 2011 *Steward* for

more details about our Accreditation through LTA.

Cascadia Weekly's Trail Rat whose infectious love of the work party yields motivating stories and great pictures. (<http://www.cascadiaweekly.com/pdfs/issues/201202.pdf>)

Recently-retired conservation partners from the public sector: **Pete Kremen** (Whatcom Co. Exec), and **Richard Grout** (WA Dept of Ecology Bellingham Region Director), whose work helped place thousands of acres of critical lands into protection.

Whatcom Land Trust is strengthening its capacity to preserve Whatcom County's most sensitive places by bringing on the Land Trust's first Executive Director, **Craig Lee**, who started in late October 2011. The Board of Directors conducted a national search the summer of 2011 and recognized Craig Lee as the right fit. Craig assisted with the launch of WLT in 1984 as a young Trust for Public Lands' staffer, and he brings a breadth



Craig Lee

of experience, knowledge and skills to help WLT prepare for our next 25 years of conservation duties.

WLT is proud of our first quarter century—over 11,000 acres preserved with the help of tireless board and community volunteers working with an excellent cadre of staff. We hope you'll stop in to meet Craig and join Whatcom Land Trust this spring at a work party, the annual auction, or one of our committees. We look forward to hearing your thoughts on how WLT can best assist Whatcom County landowners and communities in protecting the County's working farmlands, forests, streams, and shorelines and maintaining them in good health for the next 25 years to come.

WLT's Business Partner Program

Bob Keller

When I joined the WLT board in 1994 we had no staff, no office, only a telephone in Chris Moench's kitchen, and an annual budget of about \$30,000. Within four years WLT had grown to employ several staff in a downtown office equipped with phones. That cost more than thirty grand. This required fundraising, which in turn led to approaching local business firms.

Cascade Joinery, then on East Hemmi Road, became our first business partner. It built exceptional structures using recycled timber as much as possible. At the time I did not know Jeff Arvin, the Joinery's founder, but over the years he has become a personal friend who has supported WLT in many ways in addition to cash donations. It has been a strong, rewarding partnership.

In making these early requests for

funds from local firms we listed our overhead—utilities, heat and electricity, office equipment, bookkeeping, transportation costs—just like any business. They understood and agreed to help. In addition to the Joinery, we eventually gained consistent support from companies as diverse as BP, Village Books, Harmony Motorworks, The Greenhouse, Northwest Propane, Pacific Survey and Engineering and two dozen other excellent firms.

Pacific Survey and Engineering, Inc. (PSE) is a great example of this kind of partnership. With a staff of 30 primarily working on public works / capital improvement projects within northwestern Washington, PSE has donated tens of thousands of dollars of in-kind services to WLT in the form of surveys, feasibility studies and property / environmental assessments fundamental to WLT's

property acquisitions, as well as annual support from cash donations.

"We see Whatcom Land Trust and their mission of conservation and natural resource protection as a perfect complement to our work with local development and capital improvement projects. Both of these can combine to responsibly improve the quality of life for Whatcom County residents. We're very proud to be a WLT Business Partner," reports Adam Nelson, a principal at PSE.

Money is essential, of course. But a larger message in these collaborations has become even more important: that future conservation of rivers, parkland, marine shorelines, wildlife and farmland is compatible with, indeed essential for, the welfare of local businesses in Whatcom County. We feel proud to affiliate with so many successful firms.

North Fork cont. from page one

are all critical to recovery and long-term sustainability of Chinook salmon, winter steelhead, and bull trout. When these key habitats are restored and protected, many other salmonids like Coho, Chum, pink salmon, and sockeye also benefit. Along the forested river corridors, the diversity of habitats provide homes for other species of wildlife, such as raptors, passerines, coyotes, bobcats, bear, beavers, elk, and deer.

The Land Trust also worked with the Miller family to purchase a spectacular 21 acres next to the 40-acre North Fork Eagle Preserve now protecting over a half mile of free flowing river. WLT received a report this winter from a local naturalist who counted over 560 Bald eagles on the North Fork between Kendall and Deming. Over the New Year's weekend, others reported seeing more than 50 eagles just from the North Fork bridge on Mosquito Lake Road, including a Golden eagle, rarely seen west of the Cascades. During a January site visit to the Land Trust's North Fork Eagle Preserve, Conservation Director Eric Carabba noted over 50 Bald eagles roosting in the trees along the river and feasting on the remains of the winter Chum run.

To support these two strategic conservation purchases, Whatcom Land Trust was recently awarded a \$375,000 grant from the Washington State Recreation and Conservation Office – Salmon Recovery Funding Board and a \$20,000 grant from Seattle Audubon Society's Martin Miller Fund. WLT contributed \$46,200 from private supporters.



North Fork Eagle Preserve: Pink salmon spawning in side channel, Sept 2011




Wildcat Reach Salmon Preserve: In addition to salmon, the preserve is home to beaver, bobcats, bears and bald eagles.

Since the inception of the Land Trust's Salmon Eagle Elk Program in 1999, through a mix of donations, bargain sales, and fair market value purchases, WLT has acquired more than 27 properties, conserving 1,315 acres along the North Fork. In addition, WLT holds five conservation easements

on 312 acres in the North Fork watershed. We continue to work closely with willing landowners and are optimistic about completing a few more projects on the North Fork in the spring and summer of 2012. None of this would be possible without the Land Trust's dedicated supporters.

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Riverfront Land Donated



Zora Edwards of Shaw Island donated a small tract of river-front with a grove of large black cottonwoods near the confluence of the North and South Forks of the Nooksack River.



Jensen AG PDR

As you might recall, back in 2007 Don and Judy Jensen donated a conservation easement on a 22-acre patch of forest at their Custer Farm. To protect the forest and share it with the community through park and conservation easements they established the "Jensen Family Forest Park." In July, 2011, Judy Jensen completed an agricultural protection conservation easement with Whatcom County and Whatcom Land Trust through the Agricultural Purchase of Development Rights program to protect 107 acres of the Jensen Family Farm.

Hard Scrabble Falls Conservation Easement

Steve Hahn donated a conservation easement to protect his 42-acre South Fork Valley Forest. The property features the cascading Hard Scrabble Falls Creek waterfall with Western Red cedar and Big Leaf maple forest and is next to Evergreen Land Trust's 85-acre River Farm.

The property was for sale for several

years. When it sold in the spring of 2008 to a logging outfit, Steve stepped in and purchased the property to protect the forest from clear-cut logging. Over the next several years WLT worked with Steve to craft a conservation easement to meet his conservation objectives and protect the forest and aquatic features on the property.



WLT helps conservation-minded property owners like Steve Hahn protect the ecological values of the land they love.



Steve Hahn, Rand Jack, and Holly O'Neil discuss conservation options during a site visit.

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Ladies of the Lake continued from page one

contains nearly 3,000 feet of Fir Creek from where it emerges from Department of Natural Resources land until it crosses under South Bay Drive to Whatcom County Parks' shoreline recreation property.

The Ladies of the Lake Preserve, one of 14 WLT-protected properties in the Lake Whatcom drainage, is named to honor the two women who sold the property to the Land Trust. After their service as military pilots, they managed their farm in the historic community of Park, raising cattle and selling hamburgers at their classic roadside food stand, "The Ranchette."

Fir Creek, even in its current condition, supports a population of Kokanee salmon that provide a spectacle each fall when they return to spawn in the gravel streambed below the waterfalls. Kokanee are the same species of fish as Sockeye salmon (*Oncorhynchus nerka*). They are the progeny of Sockeye that were trapped in freshwater by ancient ice flows. They tend to be smaller fish than their saltwater brethren, but they display the same characteristic markings and turn bright red with green heads during spawning, with the males developing a humped back and a hooked jaw. The Fir Creek Kokanee spawn in their natal stream between September and November. Fertilized eggs emerge as fry the following

spring to migrate downstream to Lake Whatcom where they form schools and grow to eighteen inches and as much as four pounds.

Native to Washington and other western states, Kokanee have been propagated in hatcheries and introduced to lakes worldwide, and have become an extremely popular sport fish. According to Washington State University, fishing for Kokanee contributes over \$36 million of economic activity within the state. The hatchery at Brannian Creek, just west of the Ladies of the Lake Preserve, is a century old and the most prolific producer of Kokanee stock in the United States. Nearly 20 million fish are planted annually in Washington lakes from eggs collected from Lake Whatcom Kokanee.

Whatcom Land Trust's restoration plans at the Ladies of the Lake Preserve will focus on improving the water quality and habitat of Fir Creek. Planned work includes removing debris from the edges of the creek, controlling invasive weeds, loosening compacted soil, and planting native vegetation. WLT received a generous grant from Recreational Equipment Incorporated to support the restoration effort. The Trust plans to partner with REI next fall to engage volunteers in a major work party to plant hundreds of native trees and shrubs at the site.



Open space protected at Ladies of the Lake Preserve in Lake Whatcom watershed.

Steve Irving: Volunteer Property Steward

At Whatcom Land Trust we love to get people out and connecting with nature. Steve Irving has been forging that bond for over 20 years as Volunteer Land Steward of the Kelsey Preserve. A nearby resident in the Ferndale area, he was originally asked by a board member to check on the property once in awhile, and has been regularly monitoring it ever since. Steve particularly enjoyed getting to know Ruth Kelsey, who donated the land, creating one of WLT's first preserves. He talked with her about how she thought it should be managed, put up a 'Kelsey Lane' road sign so that her friends could take her out there and know when to turn into the property after she was not able to see well enough to tell them when to make the turn, and worked with Ruth's grandson to place a monument at the entrance to the property after her death.

Steve currently visits the preserve about twice a month, and has been working on blackberry removal and demolition of the dilapidated house that stands on the property. The place is looking better than ever, thanks to work parties that have focused on trail maintenance, planting willows and ninebark, and hauling house debris to a dumpster. Steve has worked alongside volunteers at every recent work party, always regaling visitors with a thorough history of the place, including its sordid past as a bank robber hide out. He says, "The Kelsey land is becoming more like forest every year and less like the working farm and house that it was when the Whatcom Land Trust took it over."

WLT's Volunteer Land Steward



Volunteer property steward Steve Irving at a brush removal work party on the Kelsey property.

program is beneficial for all involved—volunteers get to intimately know a property, while also acting as an extra set of eyes and ears for the organization, reporting misuse, new invasive species and any other problems they may find on the land. While Steve enjoys getting out and restoring Kelsey on a regular basis, for many sites the Volunteer Land Steward simply visits his/her site quarterly and reports back on what they see. The qualifications for being a good Volunteer

Land Steward? Steve advises, “A good Volunteer Land Steward is a person who loves the idea that we are setting aside special places for the future so that people who follow us can enjoy such a place... a person who embraces the fun it is to make that happen.”

If you'd like to find out more about becoming a Volunteer Land Steward, please contact our volunteer coordinator, Briana Berkowitz, at: americorps@whatcomlandtrust.org

Whatcom Land Trust Tours & Events

Cryptogam Tour!

March 31, 10 am – 1 pm

Leader: Fred Rhoades Limit: 15

Join us for a leisurely walk to investigate forested riparian habitats for “cryptogams” (spore-producing, plant-like organisms) which include mushrooms and other fungi, slime molds, lichens, mosses & liverworts, ferns & fern allies. Mycologist Fred Rhoades will lead us through the forest to discover these unique treasures.

The Emergence of Spring at Edfro Creek

Saturday, April 14, 10 am – 3 pm

Leader: Doug Huddle Limit: 12

The salmonberry begins to cover the forest floor. The bleeding hearts emerge. The trail is wet, but all around are signs of spring! Join this moderately strenuous, 3-mile hike through this relatively remote area of the South Fork of the Nooksack River.

Comfortable, waterproof footwear at least calf high is necessary. Layered clothing and rain gear recommended. Ten essentials day pack (required), trail lunch & beverage, binoculars, cameras and tripods. Walking sticks and good gloves are encouraged.

Neotropical Birds at Stimpson Family Nature Reserve

Saturday, April 21, 10 am - 1 pm

*Leader: Paul Woodcock, North Cascades Audubon Society
Limit: 15*

Neotropical migrant birds are the songbirds that represent over half of the species of North American birds. As spring begins, more than 300 species of Neotropical migratory birds head north to breed and raise young in the United States and Canada. In the fall they return to warmer climates in tropical regions of Central and South America. Join Paul Woodcock of the North Cascades Audubon Society

for a survey of neotropical birds at Stimpson Family Nature Reserve.

Nest Boxes & Bat Boxes

Saturday, April 28, 10 am – Noon

Leader: Patricia Otto Limit: 12

Come explore the world of bats and cavity nesting birds. Learn about box sizes, how to choose the right box for the right species and how to pick the appropriate site. Looking inside Wood Duck Boxes, we may see incubating ducks or Saw-Whet Owls. Chickadees should be in their boxes and cavity nesting swallows should be choosing their sites. An array of bat habitat architecture will be available to see and discuss. Barn Owl boxes in Squaticum Valley can also be seen.

Animal Tracking at WLT's Rutsatz Property

Saturday, May 19, 10 am - 1 pm

Leader: Prof. John McLaughlin, Huxley College Limit: 15

Tracking is an excellent way to document the presence and activities of wildlife. Here's your chance to learn how to do it! Huxley professor (and WLT Board member) John McLaughlin will show you how to discover animal presence by investigating the prints they leave behind – a great way to find out about the animals of our community. This year's tour is being held on WLT's Rutsatz property on the North Fork of the Nooksack River.

Jr. Stewards, Save the Date!

Join us on June 2nd at Marine Park in Fairhaven to explore the beach at low tide from 9:30 – 10:30. At 10:30 we'll begin our kickoff program with local beach guru and beloved WLT volunteer, Doug Stark! The Jr. Stewards Program is a self-paced, summer environmental education program for elementary-age kids and their families. The program is FREE and will help you discover parts of Whatcom County you may never have seen before. Pick up your program booklet, created by Riley Grant, at the kickoff or download it from our website at www.whatcomlandtrust.org.

Call 650-9470 to register.

Suggested \$5–\$10 donation. Free to WLT supporters. (Become a supporter for only \$35/family!)



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Wildcat Reach Salmon Preserve: Whatcom Land Trust works with partners such as the Nooksack Tribe to restore properly functioning river conditions. Restoration paired with permanent protection through WLT ownership is a wise investment.

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