



# HATChat

Habitat Acquisition Trust

## Green Spots: Growing Minds Outdoors

Even though it is a chilly, slightly rainy morning on the Peninsula, excitement and expectation hang in the air like mist as Laurie and I pull up to KELSET school in North Saanich. Todd and Wendy are already unloading some of the 200+ plants purchased from Russell Nursery and the kids begin to gather and pick out their tools for the planting. After months of planning, HAT staff and volunteers, along with the teachers and students of KELSET are ready to get dirty.

HAT is providing schools, teachers and students with the resources to create an outdoor nature classroom for hands on learning opportunities through the Green Spots program. The project goal is to connect youth with nature, and to link schools and neighbourhoods to local parks and green spaces. The project provides free, fun activities and outdoor nature classrooms for K-7 schools.

A partnership with HAT is tailored to meet school needs. Usually we begin with a trip to a local park to introduce students to natural habitats, native species, urban conservation issues, and personal actions to protect these spaces. The project's regional focus encourages children to connect with their unique local environment so they can better see the impacts of their daily choices.

The second phase of Green Spots is creating a native plant garden on the school grounds or other habitat conservation activities such as mulching or invasive species removal. Children are involved in planning, planting, and caring for the garden with hands-on activities that build an appreciation for nature and conservation. Students design



*"HAT is providing schools with the resources to create an outdoor nature classroom."*

and develop site plans through mapping exercises, select the right plants and set the stage for birds and butterflies. HAT assists with ordering plant material, coordinating volunteers, and liaising with administrators. As it grows, the school's naturescape can become a legacy project for graduating students.

After a morning of digging holes and arranging various native shrubs and trees, the kids and teachers alike are energized and excited about the legacy they have created at their school. For more information or to get your school involved in this project that is getting kids outside, call HAT at 250-995-2428 or email [hatmail@hat.bc.ca](mailto:hatmail@hat.bc.ca).

– DARIN STEINKEY

### INSIDE...

Outdoor Activities with Kids

Spotting Western Painted Turtles

Sponsors

Up and Adam

Chris Frye and the Analog Ghosts



Your donation helps HAT to discover and protect habitats of Species at Risk like the Western Painted Turtle, and provide opportunities for children to experience nature.

Call 250.995.2428  
or visit  
[www.hat.bc.ca](http://www.hat.bc.ca)  
and click on  
"Get Involved"

## Taking Kids Outside

"You can start today with family and friends by opening the door to go outside to explore the wealth of natural adventures right in your own backyard, neighbourhood and community." -Cheryl Charles, President, Children and Nature Network

We are learning more every day about the benefits of getting our children outside, experiencing nature. Southern Vancouver Island is a fantastic place to take children out for a short excursion or a day trip. Getting kids outdoors and connecting with nature doesn't have to involve a lot of planning, time or expense.

- Be a beachcomber! Going down to the beach at low tide allows children to see plants and creatures that usually remain hidden. Make sure you put things back where you found them. You can visit <http://www.waterlevels.gc.ca> to find out low tide times for Victoria. Bring field guide to help identify those shoreline critters.
- Get your youngster their very own set of inexpensive binoculars. This gives them a new way to look at things. Cheap, but usable, binoculars are available from many local stores.

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## On the look out for Painted Turtles

HAT staff are meeting with landowners from Metchosin to Galiano to gain knowledge of the distribution and habits of our endangered Western Painted Turtle (*Chrysemys picta bellii* - Pacific coast population). Painted turtles require very specific freshwater habitats that are threatened by rapid urban development. Road mortality and nest site disturbance are two other main threats. During last summer's outreach and field research by biologists Kristiina Ovaska and Christian Englestoft, and thanks to over 60 reports to HAT from the public and concerned landholders, three new turtle population occurrences were located.

Painted Turtles have low, smooth, oval, unkeeled upper shells. While the upper shell (top) is dark green, the lower shell (underside) features striking orange to red patterns that give them the name "painted turtle". Hatchlings are no larger than a loonie (image below), while adults 30 years or older can reach 25 cm long (12 inches). Western Painted Turtles are found in relatively few lakes and permanent ponds on Southern Vancouver Island and the Southern Gulf Islands. Some known populations occur at Elk and Beaver Lake, Langford Lake, and Great Central Lake near Port Alberni.

Hikers sometimes find hatchlings recently emerged from their nests in May. Adult female turtles are also seen walking on land during the hot summer months as they search for nesting habitat. Females dig nests with their hind feet in exposed, sandy places up to 300 metres from their aquatic habitats. These nesting sites are sometimes found along trails and road cuts with south facing slopes. Nesting sites can be the limiting factor on population size as they are vulnerable to extreme winter cold, trampling, and predation (dogs, raccoons, otters, and others).

The good news is that Painted Turtles and humans can co-exist, if landowners take a few simple precautions. These include maintaining natural shoreline vegetation and partially submerged logs, avoiding pesticide use, and protecting identified nesting areas from disturbance. Released pet turtles like Red-eared Sliders and Peninsula Cooters can be mistaken for Painted Turtles. Releasing pet turtles into the wild is a bad idea and can introduce harmful diseases to native species. Because there are no legal requirements to protect endangered species on private lands, voluntary stewardship by landowners is critical for turtle habitat protection.

We would love to hear about your turtle sightings. We still need to learn more about turtle movements over land, particularly during the spring migration (May) and summer nesting seasons. Send photos to [hatmail@hat.bc.ca](mailto:hatmail@hat.bc.ca) or call 250.995.2428.



# Chris Frye & the Analog Ghosts

host HAT  
Benefit Concert

Saturday June 6<sup>th</sup>  
at the Ambrosia  
Centre

Tickets \$20  
all proceeds benefit HAT



Chris Frye, lead singer and guitarist in two-time JUNO nominee The Bills, and rhythm guitar player for The Marc Atkinson Trio recently released his debut solo album, *Raised On Rhythm And Rhyme*. Chris is a charming and captivating storyteller and performer, and a long time HAT supporter.

Come for dinner before the performance, when Todd Carnahan of HAT will showcase photography and stories from the field, including endangered Western Painted Turtles and Sharp-tailed Snakes, green school grounds, and more.

Performance and dinner tickets available at Lyle's Place, Ditch Records, the HAT Office, and online - find the link through [www.hat.bc.ca](http://www.hat.bc.ca).

## Up and Adam...



*After working as a naturalist providing environmental education to youth in local parks for over 10 years, Adam joined HAT as Executive Director last year.*

“We have inherited a world filled with life that is marvelously rich and diverse. My goal is to share the joy of discovering and exploring nature, and to foster the next generation of stewards who will care for it.

My role at HAT is to ensure that the staff and volunteers who carry out our mission have the resources they need, and to share HAT's vision with our community.

HAT is a community organization. We work with and through our members to create a community that will appreciate, respect, and care for nature. ”

Thank you to  
all our great  
sponsors!

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### GOOD NEIGHBOURS

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### GREEN SPOTS

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In Memory of Marin Henry  
Peter Lewis

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Government of Canada Habitat Stewardship Program  
Mountain Equipment Co-op  
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## "Taking Kids Outside"

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- Allow children to take loads of pictures with a digital camera.
- Give them a small plot of land in your yard to grow their own garden. Whether it is vegetables or native plants, it allows them to dig in the dirt and make friends with bugs and worms.
- Lay out in a meadow and look up at the canopy.
- Head out to a high spot like Mount Tolmie, or to a beach, and watch a sunset or sunrise. You would be amazed at how many kids haven't had this opportunity! It happens everyday.
- Visit farmer's markets on the weekends to discover locally produced foods. Cook a meal together and talk about where the food came from and how it tastes.
- Go to the same special area (park, forest, beach) at different times of the year. Take notice of the seasonal changes and differences. Keeping a nature journal is a good way to keep track and compare what you see.

– LAURIE PARKER, OUTREACH & EDUCATION COORDINATOR



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