



HAT

Creating Conservation Legacies

Volunteer Manual

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1. Background

1.1 Contact Information

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1.2 Mission

Habitat Acquisition Trust helps people understand and care for natural environments in the Capital region.

1.3 Vision

Ours is a vision for the future of this region, where:

- ◆ The full array of natural ecosystems are healthy and protected;
- ◆ The rate of loss of natural ecosystems has been significantly slowed;
- ◆ A knowledgeable, engaged public is caring for nature, in all of its diversity;
- ◆ The public's commitment to caring for nature is supported by local governments and community organizations;
- ◆ Conservation partners are working together effectively with HAT as a leader, and,
- ◆ HAT is functioning and appreciated as a strong organization that invites participation.

1.4 History of HAT

HAT was established in 1996 by the Victoria Natural History Society (VNHS). The VNHS recognized the need in the community to have a staffed organization dedicated to conserving natural areas, providing environmental education, and fostering stewardship, and so the "VNHS Habitat Acquisition Trust Foundation" was created. Over the years our name has been shortened, and our logo updated, but our origin is still reflected in our Constitution and our relationship with the VNHS.

HAT's first project was at salmon-bearing Ayum Creek, and that acquisition spawned the whole movement to protect the Sooke Hills as a greenbelt. Since then, HAT participated in many successful acquisition projects, developed landowner contact and stewardship programs, sent tens of thousands of students to experience salmon runs, and permanently protected over 1600 hectares of natural landscapes in the Capital region.

HAT is BC Society (S-36193) and a federally registered charity (BN #88962 6545 RR0001).

1.5 Community Impact

Since being 1996, HAT has made significant gains for natural habits and the species that rely on them, and has raised the awareness level of the public about environmental issues.

- HAT has permanently protected over 1600 hectares (16 sq km or 4000 acres) of natural environments through acquisition or covenant.
- HAT owns 1 property – the Matson Conservation Area in Esquimalt. Adjacent to Barnard Park and the Westsong Walkway, the 1 hectare Matson Conservation Area is the last remaining natural Garry Oak meadow on Victoria’s Harbour.
- Through our landowner contact programs, Good Neighbours and Species-at-Risk Outreach, HAT has signed up over 500 Habitat Stewards – property owners who have agreed to maintain their land in an ecologically friendly manner.
- HAT has found dozens of new populations of Species-at-Risk, with a particular focus on Sharp-tailed Snakes, Western Painted Turtles, and Blue-grey Tailedroppers, all federally-listed endangered species.
- Through our Green Spots program, HAT has planted Native Plant Gardens at 16 schools in the Greater Victoria area.
- Through our Goldstream Chums program, HAT has sent an average of 5000 students a year to visit the Goldstream Salmon Run with a Naturalist since 2002. In total nearly 60,000 students who have participated in a program that is an iconic part of our community’s experience of Victoria’s natural history.

1.6 Major Programs

HAT’s work has traditionally fallen into a number of program areas, including:

1. Good Neighbours

HAT’s signature outreach program involves a combination of public outreach events, demonstration restoration activities, and workshops culminating in visits with property owners to provide specific, actionable advice for property owners to assist them in stewarding habitat on their land. Property owners who agree to steward their land sign a voluntary, non-legal agreement to become “Habitat Stewards.”

Types of Volunteering:

- Outreach at community events (attending a HAT booth at fairs, festivals, events etc)
- Volunteering at restoration events (removal in the spring, plantings in the fall)
- Assisting with workshops (eg. Gardening with Native Plants workshop)
- Distributing outreach materials (mailing packages, sending letters)

2. Covenants and Acquisitions

Through legally-binding protection measures, HAT protects important natural areas that benefit ecosystems in perpetuity. HAT focus has been on covenants, legally-binding agreements registered on a Property Title that HAT uses to conserve natural features. HAT currently protects 29 properties totally over 1600 hectares through covenants. Many of these covenants are the result of private landowners voluntarily donating a covenant on their land. Other covenants, often those on public-owned park land, are registered after a successful acquisition campaign. In this instance, HAT or our partners agrees to

turn over title to the property or the cash to acquire property, to park agency in exchange for a covenant that ensures that the new park land will be maintained for the benefit of natural environments.

HAT has also engages in acquisition campaigns to purchase a property outright, often in partnership with other land trusts or governments. HAT's first campaign was the successful drive to purchase Ayum Estuary. Today Ayum Estuary is a CRD Park, and HAT holds a protective covenant on the park to ensure that natural ecosystems are protected.

HAT has also assisted partners with their acquisition campaigns, resulting in the successful protection of the Sea-to-Sea Green Blue Belt (2001 with TLC and CRD Parks), Brooks Point Phase 1 (2006 with TLC and CRD Parks), Great Beaver Swamp on Galiano Island (2006 with the Galiano Conservancy), the Matson Conservation Area (2007 with the Nature Conservancy and District of Esquimalt), and many others. Most recently, HAT assisted the Pender Island Conservancy, Islands Trust Fund, and CRD Parks to conserve the last parcel on Brook Point, resulting a successful campaign in December 2013.

Types of Volunteering:

- Monitoring covenants for problems (hiking of all levels, GPS, note taking, photo recording)
- Restoration projects on covenants (streamside plantings, wetland recovery, inventories)
- Mapping covenant features (ArcGIS/Google mapping entries, GPS)
- Data entry (filing, report writing, covenant monitoring notes, contacts, map features)
- Policy Development

3. Species at Risk

Under the guidance of biologists, particularly Kristiina Ovaska and Christian Engelstoft, HAT conducts species at risk monitoring and land owner contact in species at risk habitat. Outreach is similar to our Good Neighbours program, but with a focus on preserving important habitat for endangered species. HAT's work has focused on 4 species: the Sharp-tailed Snake, the Western Painted Turtle, the Blue-Grey Taildropper Slug, and local bat species. However, many other species at risk that rely on the same imperiled habitat also benefit.

Through the program, HAT has documented dozens of new populations of our focal species, and has engaged over 100 volunteers in citizen science projects to monitor and report these species, which leads to better protection for our rarest species.

Types of Volunteering:

- Monitoring for Species at Risk in parks and covenants (driving, hiking, lifting boards, placing ACOs, set up/take down of bat detector, reporting turtles)
- Data entry of reports (entering data, photos, calling back reported sightings)
- Assisting biologist in surveys, data collections, etc (hiking, note taking, photo recording)

4. Green Spots

Through the Green Spots program, HAT helps local schools restore and enhance natural ecosystems on the school grounds, and involve students in activities that educate them about nature. HAT has worked with 16 schools on Green Spots projects.

Types of Volunteering*:

- Leading walk and talks with school groups (talking about nature, assisting in learning)
- Assisting in organizing plantings on school grounds (supervising kids, planting, ordering plants)
- Following up/Recruiting interested schools (emails, phone calls, distributing information)

5. Urban Forest Stewardship Initiative and Land Cover Mapping

HAT has led the Urban Forest Stewardship Initiative since 2006. With guidance from Judith Cullington and Jeremy Gye, HAT has convened 3 forums to foster positive action on urban forest issues in the Capital region. HAT has led 2 mapping projects to track changes in land cover in our region over time, and has made the data widely available.

The forums and mapping were instrumental in convincing the District of Saanich and City of Victoria to create comprehensive Urban Forest Strategies and revise tree bylaws, and our mapping is core feature of both strategies.

Types of Volunteering:

- Field identification of urban forests
- Designing tours, finding tour leaders, leading walk and talks with school and community groups (talking about nature, assisting in learning)
- Following up/Recruiting interested groups (emails, phone calls, distributing information)

6. Administration: Website, Social Media, Donations and Memberships

HAT is a nonprofit and receives membership dues and donations that need to be processed and logged. HAT also requires all information to be filed and recorded according to CRA (Canada Revenue Agency) standards and tax receipts are issued to the donor. HAT also has an active web presence on Facebook, Twitter, and on our website. We also publish in several local nature related publications and post articles to other various community groups. Our HAT Newsletter comes out 4 times a year, and we also send out a Covenants Newsletter and Volunteer Newsletter every other month. It is a fantastic way to communicate with our community.

Types of Volunteering:

- Updating the website, social media (writing articles, correcting errors, promoting events)
- Designing tours, finding tour leaders, leading walk and talks with school and community groups (talking about nature, assisting in learning)
- Following up/Recruiting interested groups (emails, phone calls, distributing information)
- Processing donations (entering into database, thank you call, thank you email)

*This type of position would require a criminal record check and a vulnerable people screening available at no cost through your local police station (depending on your residence)

2. Legal Structure

2.1 Constitution

1. The name of the society is the HABITAT ACQUISITION TRUST
2. The purposes of the Society are:
 - a. to promote the preservation of the natural environment through
 - i. the conservation of habitats by acquisition, by conservation covenants, or by other legal mechanisms,
 - ii. the promotion of habitat stewardship, education, and research;
 - b. to solicit donations of money, land, interest in land, and improvements thereon, and other property to be used to advance the purposes of the Society;
 - c. to receive bequests, trusts, funds, land, and improvements thereon, and to hold, invest, administer and distribute such funds and property to finance the programs and further the purposes of the Society as presently set out and for such other organizations as are "qualified donees" under the provision of the Income Tax Act and for such other purposes and activities which are authorized for registered charities under the provisions of the Income Tax Act. The directors in their sole and absolute discretion may refuse to accept any bequests, trusts, funds, or property;
 - d. to work with other societies and like bodies having interests in common with this Society, within and beyond the Province of British Columbia; and
 - e. to do all such other things as are incidental, ancillary, or conducive to the attainment of the purposes and the exercise of the powers of the Society.
3. The operations of the Society are to be chiefly carried out in the region of Southern Vancouver Island and the southern Gulf Islands.
4. The Society shall have perpetual succession and power to acquire by purchase, gift, devise, bequest, trust agreement, contract or otherwise, real and personal property within and without British Columbia and may hold, sell, dispose of, exchange, mortgage, lease, let, improve and develop any such property, and without restricting the generality of the foregoing, may acquire in any way or ways real and personal property for the purpose of funding the purposes of the Society and deal with any and all such property as empowered by this Section.
5. The activities of the Society shall be carried on without purpose of gain for its members and any income, profits, or other accretions to the Society shall be used in promoting the purposes of the Society.
6. Upon winding-up or dissolution of the Society, the assets remaining after the payment of all costs, charges, and expenses properly incurred in the winding-up, including the remuneration of a liquidator, and after payment to employees of the Society of any arrears of salaries, or wages, and after the payment of any debts of the Society, shall be distributed to the Victoria Natural History Society. If that shall not be possible the assets shall be distributed to such charities, registered under the provisions of the Income Tax Act, as shall be designated by the directors. Any of such assets remaining which had originally been provided for specific purposes, shall, wherever possible, be distributed to charities registered under the provisions of the Income Tax Act carrying on work with similar nature to such specific purposes.
7. Paragraphs 4, 5, 6, and 7 are unalterable.

3. Volunteering with HAT

3.1 Why HAT values volunteers

- **Volunteers have played a significant role** in each of HAT's milestones by contributing time, skills, enthusiasm and passion in all that they do. Volunteers have served in a variety of capacities in growing our organization. They have served to organize and implement a number of events, acted as part of committees, been public advocates within the community and of course restored natural habitats in the Capital Region.
- The work of our organization has been **greatly extended through volunteer service** into areas that, otherwise, could not be considered because of limited resources. We are grateful for all that our volunteers do and look forward to continued growth and relationship in the coming years.
- Paid staff and volunteers **come together at HAT to work toward achieving the mission, goals and objectives of the organization**. Both contribute in significant ways and volunteers are seen to compliment the work done by paid staff. Volunteers do not replace or displace paid positions. We value the experience and insights of both paid and volunteer staff and encourage feedback about our organization, processes and programs. Such feedback can be passed through respective supervisors or addressed at our Annual General Meeting.

3.2 Why Volunteer with HAT?

- HAT is a regional land trust with a staff of four so it is no surprise that **we rely heavily on our volunteers to help us with some important tasks**.
- Our board of directors are volunteers who give a lot of their time to help us at an organizational level and we also have office and fieldwork volunteers who make a huge difference for our group.
- We **offer a range of volunteer opportunities** from planting with school children to mapping properties to creating new organizational policies, the opportunities are endless.

Top 5 Reasons to Volunteer with HAT

1. **Educational** - learn from HAT staff and other volunteers about the importance of native ecosystems, local species and the history of local lands.
2. **We're Local** - help your own community and region by volunteering with HAT as we focus all of our work within the Capital Regional District (CRD).
3. **Learn New Skills** - we always make sure our volunteers benefit from their experience by learning a new skill or two along the way.
4. **Protect Nature** - the more help we have the more resources and time will be available to commit to the important goal of protecting land in the CRD.
5. **Fun!** - whether your exploring a pristine wooded area with our covenant coordinator or coming up with new material for one of our programs, well remember to keep things fun.

3.3 Current Opportunities

Admin/Creative

1. Creating an iPhone/Android app of species at risk and invasives species reporting
 - Can use iNaturalist to create a guide
2. Designing a HAT FAQ's sheet for handout and on HAT website (as well as one for Covenants)
 - Researching other land trust websites, identifying questions, filling in FAQ sheet
3. Video Projects
 - Q&A session interviews with staff and prominent members – answer questions that people can ask through social media or write in
 - Create Videos (macro, time lapse, whatever you like) of Covenanted Properties
4. Office Manager
 - Come in to the HAT office once a week to organize files, order printer ink/paper, do photocopying, etc.
5. Updating (or re-designing) website pages
 - Update old information, remove expired pages in Joomla
6. Scanning docs and filing on server
 - For covenants program, scanning documents at Monk
7. Identify quality images for Covenants
 - Go through images of covenants and add best ones to Covenant Properties Images for media, edit if necessary
8. Organize inquiry files, and old files for Covenants
 - Add to database and complete inquiry forms

Restoration

1. Student Restoration Partnership Projects (See sheet)
2. Upcoming Restoration Events on covenants/HAT Properties
 - Matson Conservation Area work party
 - Every week in Esquimalt
3. Partnership Organization Restoration Trips
 - Nature Conservancy of Canada (NCC) – James Island
 - Peninsula Streams

Species at Risk

1. Monitoring for Species at risk
 - BATS: Sunset Surveys, set up/take down of Anabat, collecting DNA samples, installing bat boxes, outreach to pest control companies & landowners with bats
 - TURTLES: monitoring for turtles, installing posters, etc
 - SLUGS: See monitoring sheet

Mapping/GIS

1. Data Management of GIS files into geodatabases
2. Creating base GIS map for each covenant (for monitoring reports)
3. Interactive map on website of covenant area

3.4 Volunteer Code of Conduct

Background:

HAT relies on earning and sustaining the trust and confidence of the public. Therefore, HAT volunteers are expected to build and conserve this trust by always conducting themselves according to high ethical standards of behavior.

Purpose:

This policy provides guidelines for value-driven, ethical conduct in the performance of volunteer responsibilities.

Conduct At Work:

While volunteering HAT, volunteers will:

- *Demonstrate respectful behavior toward HAT staff, other volunteers and members of the public;*
- *Not use inappropriate or offensive language or behaviour;*
- *Exercise care and discretion in the use of HAT equipment, furnishings, supplies and resources, ensuring that use is for business purposes only and with a view to minimizing waste;*
- *Not consume alcohol or other performance-affecting substances;*
- *Not conduct any illegal or illegitimate activity.*

Accident Prevention and Safety

HAT strives to provide a clean, safe, healthful, and hazard-free workplace. Accidents do happen, but with training, forethought, attention to detail, and personal responsibility for keeping areas hazard free, we can greatly reduce the number of accidents at our events. Accident prevention is everyone's job. If you see a safety hazard, report it to the nearest HAT staff member or Volunteer Leader immediately.

Reporting an Accident or Incident

All volunteer accidents, injuries, illnesses, and near-misses must be reported immediately to the nearest HAT staff person or Volunteer Leader and an incident form will be filled out.

Harassment

Harassment is any behavior which is known or ought reasonably to be known to be offensive and includes verbal as well as physical behavior. A volunteer who encounters or observes harassment should contact the Executive Director (or Board Chair if the issue pertains to the Executive Director). The Executive Director will immediately investigate the matter and, together with the Board Chair, will determine appropriate steps to resolve the issue. The Executive Director and President will provide an update to the Executive Committee, and if appropriate, the Board of Directors. In extreme cases and/or where resolution may be difficult, mediation or legal resources may be called upon for assistance.

I, _____ agree to abide by the above HAT Volunteer Code of
Conduct on the ___ day of _____, ___14.

Signature: _____

3.5 Volunteer Confidentiality Agreement

Volunteer Confidentiality Agreement

I, _____ understand that as a volunteer of Habitat Acquisition Trust I have a legal obligation to protect any personal or confidential information that I may collect, use, store or disclose in the performance of my volunteer responsibilities.

In accordance with the provisions of the Personal Information Protection Act of British Columbia, I agree to use personal information only for the purpose for which it was collected and purposes consistent with my volunteer responsibilities and not to disclose such information unless required by law. Such information may include, but is not limited to: donor, member, landowner and project participant personal information.

I understand that my obligations pursuant to this Agreement will continue after my volunteering with HAT concludes and that any post-volunteer breaches may result in legal action.

My signature will acknowledge that I have read, understood and will abide by this Agreement. I also acknowledge that I have read and understood the HAT Privacy Policy.

Name

Signature

Date

HAT Staff Signature