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HAT

2011 Annual Report

Dear Friends,

Fifteen years ago this December, the Victoria Natural History Society took an idea and a group of committed volunteers and created Victoria's only local land trust. The idea was that a local land trust could work with private landowners to protect critical natural ecosystems. The volunteers were part of the Natural History Society's Conservation Committee, and they became the founders of the "VNHS Habitat Acquisition Trust Foundation." While our name was eventually shortened, our goal has always been to protect natural habitat by working with our community.

There have been many challenges. The high cost of land in our region is a barrier to conservation. Government funding cuts to environmental education, protection and environmental community groups has made it more difficult to find the resources to do our work and to ensure that future generations grow up with a love for nature. Accidents and mistakes, like the fuel spill at Goldstream, damage the precious intact ecosystems that remain.

I believe that over the past fifteen years Habitat Acquisition Trust (HAT) has helped to protect natural areas and build a community of nature lovers that will benefit wildlife forever. We have secured over

1600 hectares of natural habitat in the Capital region through covenants and acquisition. Our landowner contact program, started in 2001, has enlisted over 350 Habitat Stewards, who are volunteering to monitor and protect sensitive ecosystems and Species-at-Risk on their land. Over 40,000 school children have attended free nature programs funded through HAT's "Goldstream Chums" project.

More challenges await us in the years ahead. A growing population continues to fragment rare ecosystems with new development. Rare species continue to get rarer. Some species that were once common, such as the Great Blue Heron and Common Nighthawk, are now at risk. Fewer children are spending time in nature.

But with the support of our volunteers and donors, HAT will continue to work to protect habitat and foster the love and care of nature in our community for another fifteen years and beyond. It is an immense challenge. Thank you for joining us in taking it on.

-Adam Taylor, Executive Director

protecting natural places

Second growth and maturing forests become old growth over time if left intact. Covenants are in perpetuity; they protect the future of our local natural lands. So that young forests can grow old.

“Nearly every type of old-growth Douglas-fir forest on BC’s dry coastal plain is now rare or endangered...less than 4% remaining from only 150 years ago...”

-Ministry of Environment

To keep our promises with our members and the community, we protect land. We do this by working with landowners to place conservation covenants on properties with ecosystems that are both vulnerable and crucial to our natural areas in this region. Whether it is protecting habitat for an endangered snake population or a Garry Oak meadow, conservation covenants are a legally binding document that guarantee the land will not be tampered in any way, shape or form in perpetuity – “forever”.

“I have the most satisfying and enjoyable job!” says Wendy, our Covenants and Acquisitions Coordinator. “Not only do I get to hike all over the region, experiencing some of the most precious and functional habitats here in the CRD, but I get to work directly with private and public landowners to create long-lasting relationships for protecting the land.” Wendy facilitates the covenant process, and monitors the properties annual for compliance. Usually, that translates to a beautiful walk with the landowner through the property to ensure that all is well.

By the end of this year, HAT will have a total 30 covenants protecting over 1700 hectares of habitat in the CRD region in partnership with other local land trusts. This includes five in this year alone! It is an exciting time, and it’s contagious. Leaving a legacy means leaving it be. Perhaps you have a small piece of land worth protecting... give Wendy a call!



“My name is Nancy, and I represent the animals, birds, trees, bugs, flowers and everything else that lives on the land, in the water and in the air”

Imagine the canopy of Douglas –fir enveloping your senses as you meander up a long steep road alternating between deep lush evergreen shade to dappled sunlight through big trees. The road ends at the base of a hill, with a simple large home poised atop the rocky outcrop overlooking Garry Oak meadows in full bloom and 10 acres of second growth Douglas-fir/Arbutus woodland. One can visualize peaking under a pile of oak leaves and finding a small Sharpie nestled in the duff (Sharp-tailed Snakes are listed as an endangered species in our region), and you hear the call of the red-tailed hawk soaring above. Welcome to “Ivan Island” in Metchosin. Now... imagine the sound of chainsaws, the land has been clear-cut, bulldozed and converted into a working dude-ranch. Gone are the meadows, trampled are the forests – a rare habitat lost from our region along with the wildlife that once subsisted from its symphony of mycorrhizal partnerships between fungi and flora creating a rich functioning ecosystem for all to thrive in...

“I can’t leave without protecting it” quotes Nancy in her Mission Statement to HAT. This land was gifted to Nancy from her dear friend, Ivan. It was his passion to protect and care for the land, and it is now Nancy’s turn. She is paying it forward for Ivan, for herself, for the wildlife, and for Metchosin. By the end of 2011, HAT will be registering a conservation covenant on title protecting it, in its natural state, in perpetuity. That’s a long time. We thank you Nancy and Ivan.

- Wendy Tyrrell

our story

Much like the famous Aesop fable The Tortoise and The Hare, Habitat Acquisition Trust has always taken the more logical and methodical approach to land conservation. We may not be the flashiest or richest organization but we have a lot of perseverance and passion when it comes to creating conservation legacies. We are clearly the tortoise (western painted turtle in our case) in the race to help endangered species and protect our natural spaces before they disappear. We have had to deal with many “hares” over the past fifteen years but have always managed to finish the race ahead of them and are now seeing the results of our devotion. In his fable, Aesop says that the tortoise finally decided to race the hare because of its excess bragging; I like to believe this is the same reason that a group of dedicated individuals, tired of losing natural areas, only to have the hares boast about their property developments. More “hares” would appear through the next fifteen years, including a hare that was going too fast and spilled gas into Goldstream, as well as a hare who scrapped funding for children’s program that allow kids to engage in nature.

In order to defeat these hares, we have had to maintain our solid and focused approach and inch our way closer to becoming a local land trust in which people can trust to win the race for protecting land and endangered species.



Our story differs from The Tortoise and The Hare in that we had the help of our community supporters and members, who over the years have acted as rollerblades on our tortoise feet, if you will. With the continued support of our members and our community we can carry on with our mission through the next fifteen years. Please enjoy the following timeline to see our successes and challenges over the years and how the community and our friends have helped us reach our goals.

-Peter Papagiannis



The story of HAT is one of passion for natural places, and of people willing to give their time, money, and energy to protecting nature. That passion and commitment is what has driven HAT to confront the challenges facing natural ecosystems today. Our founders were volunteering with the Victoria Natural History Society’s Conservation Committee, but felt they weren’t doing enough to protect ecosystems. So Bruce Whittington, Jan Garnett, Leah Ramsay, Jeff Stone, Mike Shepard, Colleen O’Brien, and Marilyn Lambert approached the VNHS about the challenge of...

creating HAT

HAT started as a desk in a cramped office that Bruce leant the organization in the upstairs office of his store the Field Naturalist. Lyndis Davis started volunteering – a commitment she has maintained for the past 15 years and counting. When the Field Naturalist closed, Bruce became HAT’s Executive Director, and the office moved to the Central Building, where it would remain until 2011.

During this time, HAT articulated the vision of local naturalists for a wildlife corridor stretching from Saanich Inlet to the Sooke Estuary. To anchor one end of this ambitious dream, HAT and the Society for Protection of Ayum Creek acquired the Ayum Estuary. Other organizations shared the dream too, and today the Sea-to-Sea Green Blue Belt is 90% complete. It is a remarkable accomplishment.

The dedication of HAT’s volunteers continued to drive the organization. Charles LeRoss helped the technically-challenged staff move into the modern age with computer systems (something he continues to do!). Eric Lofroth, Andy MacKinnon, and Andrew Harcombe provided a solid grounding in conservation science in a variety of roles, including President. HAT acquired the Matson Conservation Area with the help of the Nature Conservancy, and the Friends of Matson Lands.

Today, HAT has a small staff of 4, and large complement of volunteers, including 10 Board members, 350 Habitat stewards, Lyndis, Charlie, and Thora Illing in the office, and many others at every event. Because of their dedication and passion, HAT can celebrate 15 years, and look forward to many more.



new look, same message

In 2005 HAT updated its logo. In place of the detailed and identifiable Maidenhair fern, a more stylised, colourful and versatile fern was selected.

milestones

1997 15 years of conservation legacies 2012

Victoria Natural History Society's Conservation Committee forms HAT to protect ecosystems and educate the public.

July 1996

HAT signs its first covenant protecting natural ecosystems on private land. Covenants become an important HAT strategy.

Jan 1999

CRD Parks, TLC, and HAT protect Sooke Hills with a conservation covenant.

Mar 2001

HAT begins its first "Good Neighbours" community stewardship project in the Tod Creek Watershed.

April 2001

Goldstream Chums sponsor free salmon programs through HAT. 40,000 children gets free salmon program by 2011.

Mar 2003

HAT acquires the Matson Conservation Area, the last Garry Oak meadow on Victoria's Inner Harbour, with the help of the Friends of Matson Lands & the Nature Conservancy.

June 2005

HAT establishes the first 2 Green Spots Native Plant Gardens at Braefoot and Sundance Schools.

Dec 2005

Lyndis Davis celebrates over 10 years of volunteering for HAT. That's right, since *before* we existed!

2007

Over 30,000 students have attended free nature programs at Goldstream through the *Chums* program

Nov 2008

350th Volunteer Habitat Steward signs up through the Good Neighbours program.

July 2011

before 1995

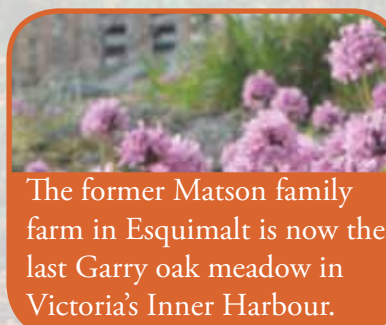
Development and fragmentation threaten rare ecosystems throughout the region.



HAT's Board & staff celebrates the Ayum Estuary purchase. Standing, l to r: Jeff Stone, Andy MacKinnon, Marilyn Lambert, Burce Whittington, Mike Shepard, Calvin Sandborn. Front: Jan Garnett, Colleen O'Brien, Andrew Macdonald (holding son Bryn)

Feb 2002

Government scraps all nature programs in Provincial Parks. 4000 children don't witness Goldstream Salmon Run.



The former Matson family farm in Esquimalt is now the last Garry oak meadow in Victoria's Inner Harbour.

July 2006

Fire burns 32 hectares of the Galiano Heritage Forest, protected by HAT through a covenant.

June 2008

HAT and the Urban Forest Stewardship Initiative map tree loss in the region from 1986 to 2005. The mapping demonstrates that dramatic tree loss has occurred in most areas.

Apr 2011

40,000 litres of diesel fuel spill into the Goldstream River.

2012 on...

As development and population growth continue to threaten rare ecosystems throughout the region, HAT's has an important role to play in the future

1998

Ayum Creek Estuary is saved! HAT & Society for the Protection of Ayum Creek purchase the 14 acre property. It becomes the anchor of the Sea-to-Sea Green Blue Belt Vision.



2004

Central Saanich permanently protects Oak Haven Municipal Park with a HAT-held conservation covenant. Covenants on public parks protects fragile ecosystems from changing land use in the future.



2010

HAT signs its 25th covenant protecting 24 acres of land near the Sooke River. HAT now protects over 1600 hectares of natural land under covenants in the Capital region.



stewardship & education

good neighbours

No one loves a good neighbour more than the beleaguered cutthroat trout of urban streams. HAT located fifty Good Neighbours through our ongoing community outreach project in the Bilston & North Latoria Creek Watersheds this summer. By providing interested homeowners with solutions to erosion, nutrient leaching and invasive plants, HAT is helping improve water quality for fish and the Lagoons that receive residential or farm runoff. Forty Metchosin and Langford residents signed Land Care agreements with HAT and many more received our information packages about the unique natural features of their neighbourhoods. We co-hosted several events at Witty's Lagoon with CRD Regional Park staff and initiated a long term stewardship project with Westmont Elementary School at the adjacent Ruby Creek HAT covenant lands. HAT staff also identified four more potential covenant properties through visits with private landowners. Dozens of volunteers learned about rare habitats, creekside planting, and invasive plant threats in a series of co-hosted workshops from Winter Creek (featuring Ian Mackenzie's Bilston Watershed Habitat Protection Association) to Havenwood Park (with conservation covenant co-holder the City of Colwood). In 2012, the focus of our award-winning project shifts to the Craigflower Watershed. From Thetis Lake to Portage Inlet, we're helping to maintain quality of life and sustainable communities.



You'd think it would be easy to find a bright blue slug in a pile of yellow maple leaves – but it's not! Blue-Grey Taildroppers are rare terrestrial molluscs that may be living undetected in backyards from Metchosin to Mill Hill.

species at risk

Kristiina Ovaska recently found one in Calvert (Trevlac) Park while helping municipalities and the CRD to inventory their Species at Risk. And while Christian Engelstoft and David Manning helped Pender Islanders find Sharp-Tailed Snakes, Todd Carnahan and Alicia Butula tracked Painted Turtles in the rural ponds of Metchosin. By tracking turtles with partners from Swan Lake Nature Sanctuary, we're discovering the secret destinations of egg-laying female turtles as they move through increasingly alien urban landscapes and waterways. But finding the critters is just the first step: HAT helps private and municipal landholders develop management plans to maintain the habitat for their endangered neighbours. Christian and Kristiina's research will inform our future plans to secure at-risk populations of these and other threatened species such as the Phantom Orchids and Yellow Sand Verbena.

Wendy Tyrrell (assisted by landowner Moralea Milne) established photopoint monitoring stations on Camas Hill where concerted restoration efforts are ongoing to secure rare snake habitat from broom invasion. After six years you'd think we had a sense of the tiny snake's distribution, but Christian recently found a new Sharpie population in the Bilston Waterhed and one was found in Pemberton BC, extremely distant from any other known occurrence!

- Todd Carnahan



Goldstream Spill

The consequences of the fuel spill into Goldstream River will remain for years, but HAT continues to be dedicated to creating opportunities for children to experience nature at the Park.

Green Spots are popping up everywhere! This year South Park and Salt Spring Elementary Schools join Lansdowne and Glanford Middle Schools and fourteen others in our Region that are getting outside to learn from nature. HAT provides ongoing consultation and funding for our partner schools that adopt natural spaces or create their own naturescape gardens. Just as the first "Nature Kindergarten" has been launched at Sangster Elementary in Colwood, HAT is helping administrators and teachers at other schools to beat the nature deficit disorder in their student populations. We've also helped other demonstration projects get started, like the Bowker Creek Initiative's naturescape in Fireman's Park.

HAT is entering its 15th year with hope and optimism. The past year has been particularly rewarding. These are challenging economic times, and HAT's Board has been working to ensure HAT remains a healthy and active organization through the recession and beyond. At the same time, HAT has successfully completed several important conservation projects. I would like to recognize the great work of our dedicated staff and the support of our members and donors. Thank you for sustaining HAT's work!

from the Board



table

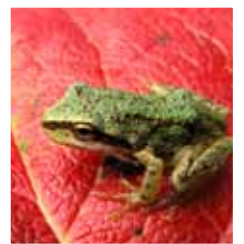
In light of the current cutbacks to non-profits and conservation

organizations, the financial support provided by our members and donors is more important than ever. This is why the HAT Board has fully endorsed and is committed to the Habitat Sustainer Drive. This drive focuses on enrolling donors in a monthly giving program to provide HAT with the ability to plan programs with more security and stability. If you are a current or past donor, please renew your commitments and consider inviting others to become supporter of HAT.

As President, I felt it was important for me to lead the way. That's why I decided to become a monthly donor, and why I asked the rest of the Board to do same. I am proud to say that today the all our Board members are Habitat Sustainers too.

The HAT Board is optimistic that the organization will continue to offer the same award winning habitat stewardship programs and preservation of natural habitats for years to come.

-Geoff Huber, Board President



Leaving a Legacy: Planned Gifts Protect Places

A legacy is a profound commitment to conservation in the Capital region. Donating property or funds can greatly impact the community you live in. We are an organization who will use your donation to make an impact on the community at large, creating a legacy that your family will cherish forever.

This year we have been fortunate to receive two planned gifts that will go a long way to protecting land and strengthening natural lands in our area. We would like to express our gratitude to two individuals this year. Patricia Boyle, who recently passed way, blessed us with a bequest of \$50,000 to our acquisition fund. We have already allocated \$3000 of her donation to protect 50 acres of land adjacent to Thetis Lake. Helen Mansfield, another amazing friend of ours, who has decided to leave us her house and property in her will in order to protect land in her community.

Past legacy gifts have been used to help conserve natural areas like Laughlin Lake, Great Beaver Swamp, Lower Mt Erskine, and Brooks Point, by matching donations. Individuals like Patricia and Helen are vital to an organization like HAT and we cannot express our gratitude enough for their commitment to creating conservation legacies.

-Peter Papagiannis, Community & Development Coordinator



HAT

2011



Annual Report

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... and to our many other members and supporters!