



HAT

2020

ANNUAL  
REPORT

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**Katie Blake**  
Executive Director

## Hello and Welcome Message from the Director

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Thank you to everyone who helps HAT work hard every day to protect and steward the incredibly special natural environments on southern Vancouver Island and the Gulf Islands! HAT's work is made possible by our volunteers, our donors and other supporters.

In January 2020, HAT staff sat together and planned out a busy field season full of our usual community-based events. By March, that schedule was irrelevant. I am proud that the HAT team was able to act quickly and nimbly to adapt to the challenges that this year presented.

We designed safe ways to do field work with volunteers. We educated through videos. And yes, we spent a lot of time on Zoom.

Thank you to our community of members, volunteers, donors and partners who remained engaged and dedicated to conservation during unprecedented times. Ultimately, in times of uncertainty, the importance of the natural world that sustains and nurtures us becomes even more evident. We'll keep working for nature, and we know you will too.

With gratitude,  
Katie Blake

*“In a challenging and troubling year, participating in HAT's work has provided reassuring reminders that the natural world is a steadfast source of sanctuary, of inspiration and of connection. And that in caring for the earth, we are, in so many ways, caring for ourselves and each other. Doctors have started to prescribe outdoor time for improving mental health—HAT helps in protecting areas that are close to our urban environments where this can be practiced. The completion of our strategic plan is another highlight, and guides us towards better partnering and cooperation with local indigenous communities.”*

**Andrew Harcombe**  
Board President



## Protecting Land Where We Work

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Habitat Acquisition Trust works primarily on Southern Vancouver Island and Southern Gulf Islands, within the borders of the Capital Regional District (CRD). HAT works and stewards ecosystems in the traditional and unceded territories of Southern Vancouver Island and the Gulf Islands are part of the traditional territories of the WSÁNEĆ Nations, the Malahat Nation, the ɫəkwəŋən people (Songhees and Xwsepsum Nations), the Sc'ianew First Nation, the T'Sou-ke Nation, the S'Klallum Nation, the Pacheedaht First Nation, the Semiahmoo First Nation, the Cowichan Tribes and all other indigenous communities that have lived on and stewarded these lands since time immemorial.



# LAND PROTECTION PROGRAM





# Protecting Land For Future Generations

South Vancouver Island and the Gulf Islands are home to some of the most beautiful and rare ecosystems in Canada. HAT works with landowners to protect natural areas by assessing each property and applying different tools for conservation.

Much of our land protection work happens behind the scenes. Through discussion and careful planning we lay the groundwork for that protection of breathtaking pieces of nature. Currently HAT is working on 3 diverse land protection projects with a variety of partners in Metchosin, Saanich and the Highlands.

These projects include: a partnership with the CRD on the recently announced Mountain Road Forest campaign; continuing work in a multi partner effort to explore conservation land uses at Mary Hill; and assisting a covenant landowner in passing the torch of conservation land ownership through the support of the Land Trust Conservation Fund.

The success of these current projects will ensure the protection of more than 200 ha of increasingly rare Coastal Douglas fir forest ecosystems and the species that are dependent upon them.

Along with working on our current projects, HAT monitored 16 covenant properties totaling over 1000 hectares of protected land.

This work could not have been completed without the enthusiastic efforts of our summer intern Nicole da Silva, and a number of talented volunteers. These volunteers not only helped collect valuable data, they shared their skills by taking beautiful photos and creating a land protection video showcasing HAT's work.

16

COVENANTS  
MONITORED

3

PROTECTED AREAS IN  
PROGRESS

1000

HECTARES OF  
LAND VISITED



# Community-Based Habitat Restoration It Takes a Village

HAT is responsible for the protection and care of many pieces of land that are increasingly approached by urban developments. Though these lands may be protected from development in perpetuity, they are never fully isolated from the outside world.

Community-based habitat restoration attempts to create partnerships between ecosystems and the communities that exist within them. It provides community volunteers, landowners, and students a chance to learn about and improve local green spaces, grow social capital, and help heal the land - one ivy vine at a time.

Because nature and neighbourhood often stand together in a complex web of daily interactions, these protected lands are up against the threats of human activity. The ecology of the land is often affected in ways that prevent these natural spaces from thriving, such as the introduction of invasive species.

For HAT, habitat restoration is a must. We know that we can't just walk away after protecting an area. We strive to invest in managing the land and ensuring it functions at its best potential over the long-term.

In the past year HAT set up eleven restoration workshops, engaged with 362 volunteers and removed 181 cubic meters of invasive species. By providing opportunities to connect to the land, HAT hopes to inspire individuals to care about the future of these special places. So far HAT's stewardship group volunteers have committed to spending over 800 hours a year restoring natural spaces.

362

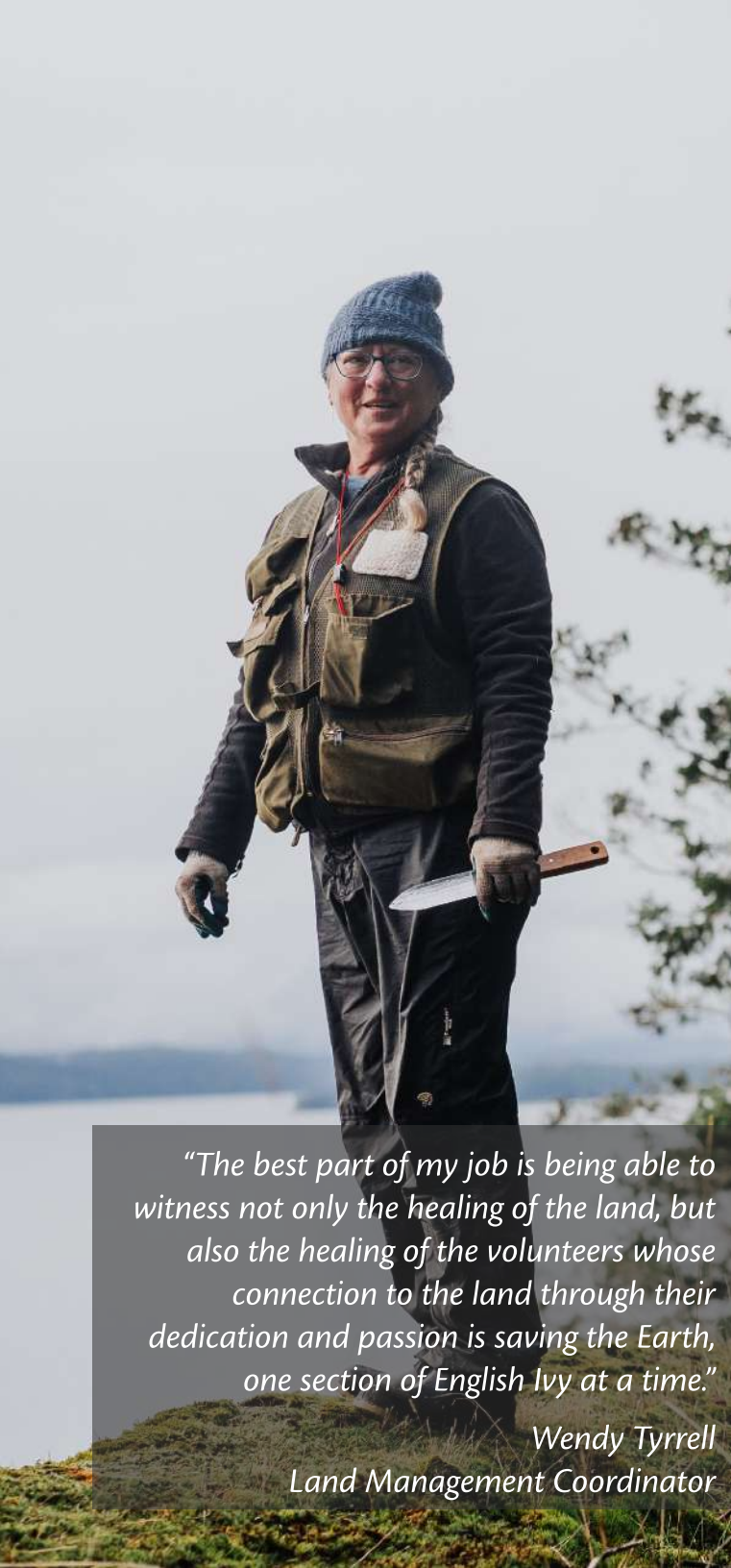
VOLUNTEERS  
ENGAGED

11

RESTORATION  
WORKSHOPS

57

STEWARDSHIP GROUP  
RESTORATION DAYS



*"The best part of my job is being able to witness not only the healing of the land, but also the healing of the volunteers whose connection to the land through their dedication and passion is saving the Earth, one section of English Ivy at a time."*

Wendy Tyrrell  
Land Management Coordinator

## Land Management AT A GLANCE

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Despite the devastating setbacks of a global pandemic, we were inspired to create new opportunities for people to get outdoors and do restoration work, to the benefit of both the environment and the community. This work is made possible by the hundreds of hours put in by communities, and our partnerships and collaborations with local organizations and groups.

**82**

HECTARES OF FOREST  
UNDER RESTORATION

**181**

CUBIC METERS OF  
INVASIVES REMOVED

**870**

VOLUNTEER HOURS



**GOOD  
NEIGHBOURS  
PROGRAM**







# Being a Good Neighbour to Nature Stewardship Impact

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We believe that individuals and their acts of stewardship can have a great impact on the local environment. By taking a community-based approach, we reach the community through the engaged individual who in turn enhances their local environment and inspires their neighbours to do the same.

The foundation of the Good Neighbours Program is action on the ground. Habitat stewardship is not a single act, but an ongoing practice that shapes how we interact with the natural world around us.

The idea is that every individual can make small changes to their everyday actions and reactions that can have an incredibly large impact on the habitats around them.

This past year we were delighted to support 39 new and existing Habitat Stewards to address their barriers and reach their stewardship goals, which ranged from turning a barn into a bat mansion, to planting an acre of pollinator meadow with native wildflowers, totalling 792 plants installed by HAT Habitat Stewards in 2020.

This program evolves and changes every year as we reach out to the community through mail-out surveys, phone calls, and site visits to learn more about the barriers to practicing stewardship. Whether it is financial, physical, or educational, we work hard to address those barriers and help turn people's stewardship goals into a reality. We want to make sure that being a Good Neighbour to nature is accessible to everyone.

As our current Good Neighbours project comes to a close we look forward to continuing to support the stewards we have met, while meeting new folks in the coming year.

39

SITE VISITS

792

NATIVE PLANTS  
INSTALLED

485

LAND OWNERS  
CONTACTED



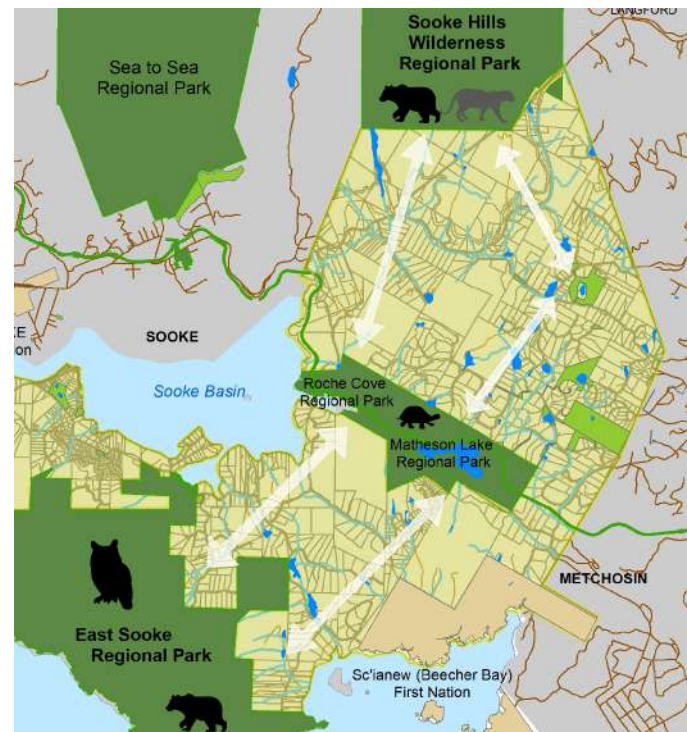
# It's a Wrap - Year 3 of 3 for the project: **Wildwood Wetland Wildlife Corridors**

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The Wildwood Wetland Wildlife Corridor Project launched in 201 with the intent to:

*Connect individuals and communities in a united effort to create safe and thriving wildlife corridors for all manner of flora and fauna, from bears to bees and everything growing in between.*

From East Sooke to the Sooke Hills, we connected with 485 landowners in the last year about their options for stewardship on the land and waters. After 3 years we are wrapping up this initiative and looking forward to the next one starting April 2021.



## **INITIATIVES**



**INVASIVE SPECIES  
REMOVAL**



**HEDGEROW  
INSTALLATION**



**LANDOWNER  
CONTACT**



**EDUCATION**



# Hedgerows for Habitat

## The Story of Lohbrunner Farm

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**It was once believed that agriculture and conservation worked against each other, but that is old-school thinking. Things have changed thanks to innovative and progressive farmers like Scott at Lohbrunner Farm. This is just the beginning.**

In 2011, HAT launched the Bilston Creek Watershed Good Neighbours Project. Ten years later, we are revisiting the natural spaces in this watershed and connecting with Habitat Stewards, both new and experienced, offering a new opportunity: the Hedgerows for Habitat Initiative. This initiative successfully spurred a partnership with the farmers of Lohbrunner Community Farm Co-op, where the idea to take on a stewardship action was on the mind of one particular farmer.

Leading this project was Habitat Steward Scott Harris (right) of Gnarly Taters Farm, who proposed the idea to the other farmers at Lohbrunner, hoping they would be keen to help nature, given the legacy of the original landowner, the late Norma Lohbrunner.

After much discussion, a hedgerow was chosen along their fence line, not just to be a windbreak and visual barrier, but also to provide a corridor of habitats for pollinators and other beneficial insects.

With the help of HAT and a generous neighbour, the farmers planted 200 ft of hedgerow and over 175 native plants - no small task when the farm floods all winter.

Lohbrunner demonstrates that bringing the community on board is key, and stewardship does not necessarily inhibit the usability of farmland, but may improve productivity while providing homes and food for pollinators.





# Wildlife Stewardship All Creatures Great and Small

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Individuals can often have a large impact on the ecosystems in which they live. HAT's Stewardship Program is focused on encouraging the stewardship of habitats for all species of flora and fauna within an ecosystem, but especially those under greatest threat, or at risk of extinction.

We partner with other organizations, biologists, and educational institutions to help us identify where a particular species or ecosystem may be located.

This first step is critical to ensuring our outreach efforts are focused and we use our time efficiently. By locating the species more precisely, we can then work with the surrounding landowners to become stewards of the habitat that species depends on. In addition, we link together wildlife specialists with keen volunteer citizen scientists to undertake the surveying and monitoring of these species at risk.

*"Without the professional expertise of the biologists, or the keen enthusiasm of the volunteers, this program would not be possible" - Paige, Stewardship Coordinator.*

Our native local pollinators depend on native plants to thrive, and that is why we encourage landowners and land managers to install native gardens and hedgerows.

We were honoured to be invited as co-hosts of the Island Pollinator Initiative's free and online **Pollinator Steward Training Webinar Series**, with Pollinator Partnership Canada, Parks Canada, and Saanich Native Plants. There were 10 webinars produced, and there were over 428 individuals who participated. All of the webinars were recorded and posted for free online to ensure that self-paced certification training is accessible into the future.

*Pollinator Biologist Lora Morandin (right) and her daughter Terena (left) training HAT staff on protocols for documenting pollinator species in the Lochside Meadow*

75

NEW POLLINATOR  
STEWARDS

1.2

ACRES OF WETLAND  
RESTORATION

6

AMPHIBIAN COVER  
BOARDS INSTALLED



*Wildlife Stewardship volunteer Meg Lovett checking Western Screech-Owl nest boxes for presence of owls or other wildlife (usually squirrels).*

# Bats and Western Screech Owls

## Things that Fly in the Night

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Nocturnal creatures are often misunderstood and much of this is due to how little we know about them. At HAT we do our best to support research, provide and monitor habitats, and educate the public about things that fly in the night.

Public education about wildlife like bats and owls is a large part of what we do, along with reaching out to industry professionals like roofers, painters, and pest management companies to ensure best practices are being followed.

Each year HAT heads up the South Vancouver Island Chapter of the **BC Community Bat Program** for all bat-related questions and concerns for many of the Gulf Islands and from Victoria to Qualicum.

This involves coordinating volunteers for the BC Annual Bat Count, fielding calls and emails from concerned or interested members of the public, helping homeowners perform safe exclusions of bat colonies in human

structures, and monitoring for the presence of White-Nose Syndrome in the local area. There was a total of 392 volunteer hours counting bats all across the region.

Similarly with our Western Screech-Owl Project, we had volunteers out listening for the presence of owls, and 78 owl nest boxes were monitored for the presence of owls. We hope to detect more activity with the installation of audio recording units (ARUs) in areas with known Western Screech-Owl habitats.

At the end of the day, our wildlife stewardship work comes down to ensuring the ecosystems that support these animals are restored, protected, and maintained. Teaching people that wildlife needs our help is the first step.

78

OWL NEST BOXES  
MONITORED

392

ANNUAL BAT  
COUNT HOURS

14

BAT ROOSTS  
MONITORED

# GREEN SPOTS





# Green Spots

## Getting Kids Outside

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Part of education is learning about the ecosystems and natural world that supports us. This is best done out in nature, in outdoor classrooms and gardens where kids can experience nature with all their senses.

Nature is an incredible way for children (and adults) to learn about the world around them, while developing problem-solving skills, creating opportunities for discovery, and reducing stress. HAT partners with local schools to help them create outdoor learning spaces and gardens. This usually centers around the removal of invasive species and the installation of native plants involving children, parents, and teachers.

The Green Spots program relies on the many hours put forward by volunteers, staff, students, parents, and teachers. Our time is limited and though we provide guidance, the majority of what happens in the school is encouraged by the dedicated nature enthusiasts inside its own walls.

Last year Green Spots led two successful school-based restoration projects at Lochside and Doncaster Elementary Schools. Through these Green Spots Projects, funded by NSERC (Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council), we were able to work with over 900 school students, and plant over 700 native plants.

**“ Working with 25 elementary school students at one time in the outdoors can be challenging and humorous at times, but seeing the smiles on their faces when they plant a seedling for the first time is precious, and priceless! ”**

**- Sara Lax, Green Spots Volunteer**

700

NATIVE PLANTS  
INSTALLED

900

KIDS INVOLVED

3

SCHOOLS



# Goldstream Chums Swimming Up Stream

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Located at Goldstream Provincial park in the Nature House, the Goldstream Chums has provided education programs for kids K-7. Here kids can learn about the salmon's fascinating life cycle and their role in nature. The nature house was heavily impacted by COVID-19 and remained closed through the spring and summer months but managed to open in time for the salmon run between October and December.

**5300**

VISITORS TO THE  
NATURE HOUSE

**1100**

SALMON RUN  
STUDENTS

**500**

VOLUNTEER HOURS

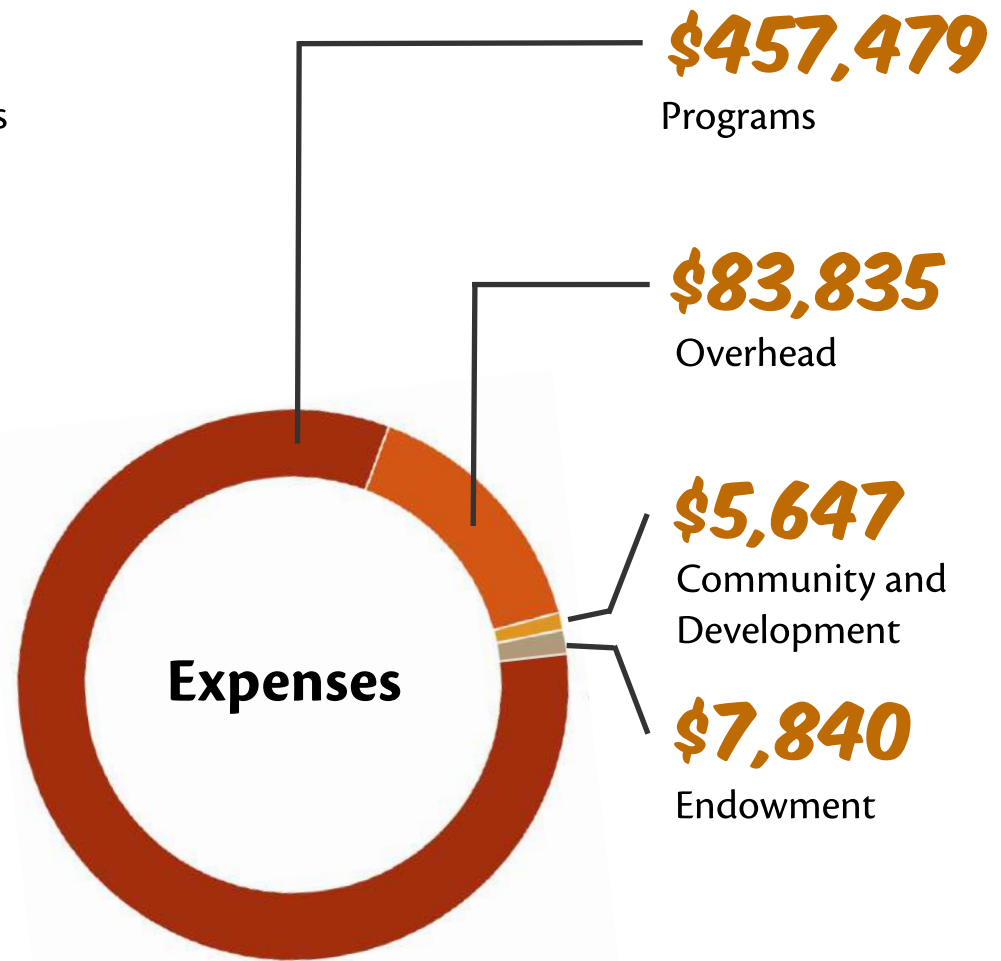
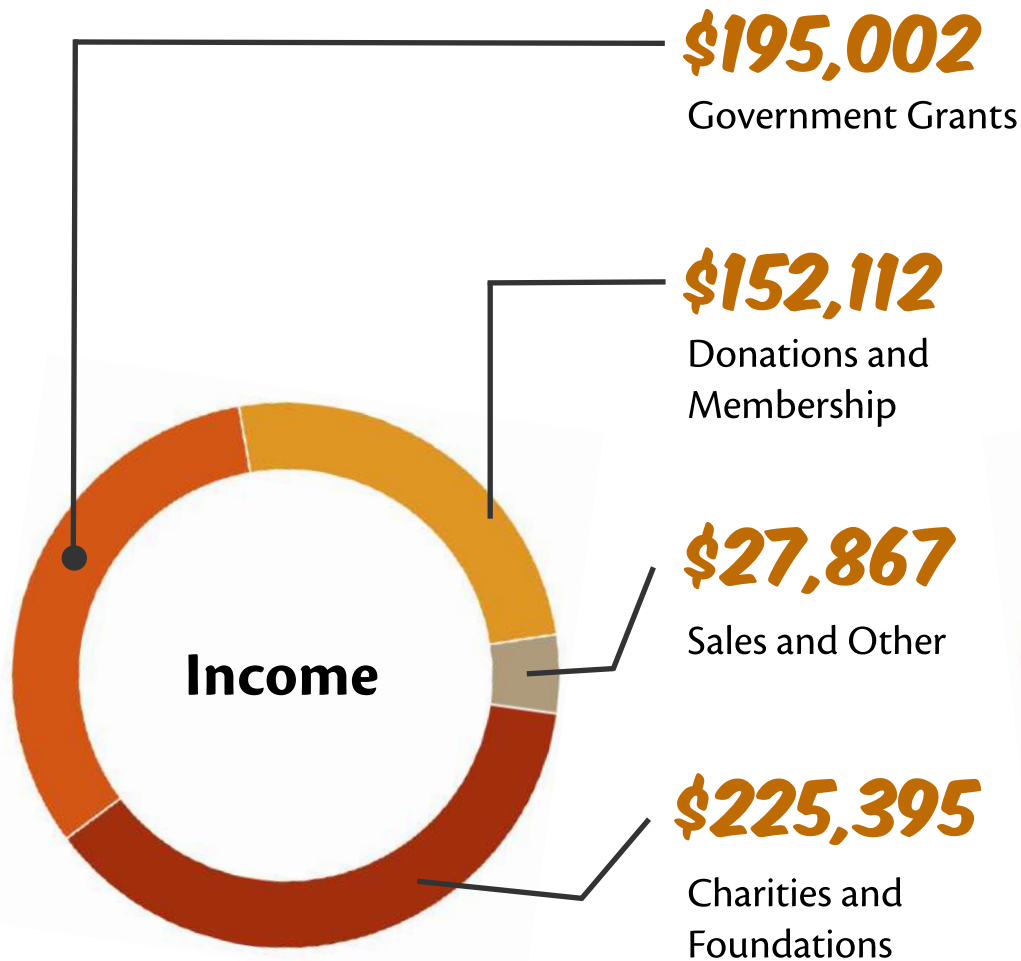




# Financials for 2019-2020

YEAR END OCTOBER 31, 2020

**\$600,376 RAISED IN 2020**





# THE PEOPLE

## STAFF AND BOARD

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At HAT we have a wonderful team of passionate and enthusiastic staff and board members that work tirelessly to ensure that our organization continues to maintain the standard of excellence that has come to be expected of us.

### STAFF

Katie Blake, *Executive Director*

Wendy Tyrrell, *Habitat Management Coordinator*

Barb von Sacken, *Land Protection Coordinator*

Paige Erickson-McGee, *Stewardship Coordinator*

Chris Perrin, *Community Development Coordinator*

Ronna Woudstra, *Outreach and Bat Program Coordinator*

### BOARD

Andrew Harcombe, *President*

Elizabeth Easton, *Vice-President*

Elizabeth Belcher, *Treasurer*

Rhonda Korol, *Secretary*

Stephanie Hazlitt, *Director*

Peter Lewis, *Director*

Pierre Iachetti, *Director*

Charlie Gordon, *Director*

Katie Bell, *Director*

### CONTRACTORS

Michael Brinsmead, *Bookkeeper*

Tania Tripp, *Biologist*

Sara Loos, *GIS Technician and Spatial Analyst*

Christian Engelstoft, *Biologist*

### INTERNS

Nicole da Silva, *Land Protection Intern*

Rachel Tancock, *Conservation Technician*

Sara Lax, *Conservation Technician*



# THANK YOU TO OUR PARTNERS AND DONORS

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Thank you to our **286** individual and monthly donors, and our **156** members. Your contributions were responsible for **25%** of our 2020 funding. For everyone one else who contributed and made our work possible, we are forever grateful.

## Organizations

BC Conservation Foundation  
Benevity Community Impact Fund  
Canada Green Corps  
Capital Unitarian Universalist  
Congregation  
Habitat Conservation Trust Foundation  
Harweg Foundation  
Metchosin Foundation  
Provincial Employees Community  
Services Fund  
Sitka Foundation  
TD Friends of the Environment  
Foundation  
We all Live Here Foundation  
Westwind Sanctuary  
Wildergarden Vacation Rental  
Hummingbird Foundation  
Conservation Alliance  
United Nation Association in Canada  
United Way of Greater Victoria  
Victoria Foundation  
Victoria Natural History Society

## Government

Capital Regional District  
City of Colwood  
City of Langford  
District of Highlands  
District of Oak Bay  
Federal Government of  
Canada (Employment Social  
Development)  
Government of Canada  
Province of British Columbia

## In Honour

Susan Dulc  
Shelby Lowery

## In Memory

Paul Mably  
Bob Darling  
Richard Sutherland  
Bev Grooms

## Businesses

Blanshard Street Winery  
ecologist  
First Capital Realty Inc.  
Gartside Marine Engines  
Haultain Health Centre  
Horticultural Centre of the Pacific  
Island Equipment Owners Assn  
LesPlan Educational Services  
Metchosin Farm  
Onyx Lion Herbs  
Peninsula Co-op  
R.L.C. Enterprize Ltd  
Saanich Native Plants  
Sea Cider Farm & Cider House  
Smoke & Mirrors Coffee Co.  
Victoria Residential Builders Assn  
West Coast Refill  
**Schools**  
Doncaster School Auxiliary  
Society  
School District 61  
Lochside Elementary (SD63)  
Pearson College UWC



Habitat Acquisition Trust is a registered Canadian Charity: #88962 6545 RR0001  
All donations over \$10 are tax-deductible.

## **CONTACT US**

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