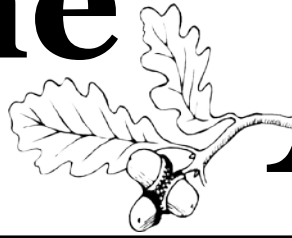


the Acorn



The Newsletter of the Salt Spring Island Conservancy

Number 42, Fall 2009

Conservancy Stewardship Project grows



Tidal heron

photo by Todd Carnahan

The Salt Spring Island Conservancy is pleased to announce the continuation of the Stewardship Project through funding from the Habitat Stewardship Program, Public Conservation Assistance Fund, and British Columbia Transmission Corporation. Following five years of successful stewardship projects, the 2009 project builds on much of the ongoing work that the Conservancy is involved in with Species At Risk on the island, as well as developing new areas of focus. With over 90% of the island privately owned, landowner stewardship is a vitally important aspect of conservation.

Some of the ongoing work the Conservancy is doing includes landowner contact, outreach and education, and surveys for a number of rare species, including the sharp-tailed snake, Western painted turtle, phantom orchid, great blue heron, common nighthawk, olive-sided flycatcher, and red-legged frog. The project will also include spring night

surveys for owls, summer surveys for rare butterflies, and wetland amphibian surveys. We will continue our work monitoring the yellow montane violet and other rare plants on Mt. Tuam, as well as surveying for Western bluebirds in their associated habitats. There are over 70 bluebird boxes installed on Salt Spring Island in an effort to help reestablish nesting sites for the once common songbird.

The Salt Spring Island Conservancy launched its new website in June 2009 (www.saltspringconservancy.ca), so please check out our new look and browse for interesting features like our Species At Risk pages (with photographs, descriptions, and links to 45 rare species on Salt Spring), Stewards in Training, Owls of Salt Spring Island, Amphibian Identification, Conservation Options, and details about our four Nature Reserves. Watch for our ongoing series of educational events and presentations for the public all year long.

Our biologists will continue to work with landowners and volunteers interested in conservation issues such as land restoration, habitat enhancement, Species At Risk stewardship, and long-term conservation options. We have

a busy year ahead of us and look forward to meeting many of you throughout the year. If you are interested in supporting the work that the Conservancy does, becoming a member or making a donation are wonderful ways to offer your support. For more information, please contact the Salt Spring Island Conservancy at info@saltspringconservancy.ca or 250-538-0318.

~ Laura Matthias

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<http://saltspringconservancy.ca/events>

Fall's bounty

Fall has its own sense of renewal as the maple leaves offer themselves for mulch and the winter veggie starts look strong and snow-proof. Our small but vigorous conservancy also is constantly renewing itself thanks, in large part, to the interest and support of the membership.

We have several new board members who bring knowledge, experience and dedication to conservation of our natural world. I continue to be amazed and touched by the genuine, deep commitment so many of our community members demonstrate through their hours of volunteer work for SSIC. Two of the executive are stepping back for a breather but we expect they will still be active in the green world.

Our appreciation goes out to Bob Weeden who served as president for the past 2 years and who has served in this capacity several times before. He will stay on the board and the executive. His experience is invaluable, his advice consistently thoughtful, his commitment unassailable and his puns remarkably and predictably awful. Our deep thanks to Bob for all his contributions and his lifelong work for environmental protection. Samantha Beare also has served as an officer and was the treasurer for many years. She was of enormous help in getting us organized and in understanding and communicating the various rules, regulations and nuances of managing a non-profit organization. We already miss her energy and creativity at the board and hope she will come back to the table invigorated and as feisty as ever.

We have been busy even over the languid summer. We have, for example, had a meeting with our partners in Mt. Erskine: B.C. Parks and Nature Conservancy of Canada about how best to manage the fragile grandeur of that land and we agreed to a plan. One of the aspects of the plan is that Parks will now designate the park as a 'Special Features' zone which describes it as their most protected category outside of a wilderness area. We will continue to monitor Mt. Erskine and hope to be establishing signage and trail marking in the near future.

But last and foremost I want to acknowledge the staff of SSIC. They work long hours, they are grossly underpaid but they bring enthusiasm, expertise and a broad perspective to their (and our) work. They deserve our constant support and appreciation

Daily we all see beings in our environment that need to be nourished and destruction that needs to be addressed and plants, trees, wildlife and habitat that require protection. We thank all of you who are committed to this protection: So press on, don't be ashamed to hug a tree and don't forget to sign up as many people as you can in SSIC.

~ Maureen Bendick

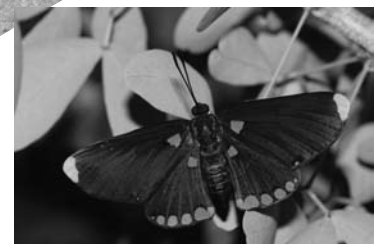


School Program 2009



Butterfly Walk

May 2009



Director's Desk



We have a NEW E-mail address:

ssic@saltspringconservancy.ca

A reminder that our new e-mail address for SSIC and to reach the Executive Director (Linda Gilkeson) is: ssic@saltspringconservancy.ca

Our old e-mail will continue to work until next spring, but now is a good time to update your address book.

Here are our other staff e-mail addresses:

Susan Dann: office@saltspringconservancy.ca
 Robin Annschild: robin@saltspringconservancy.ca
 Laura Matthias: laura@saltspringconservancy.ca

AND please don't forget to tell us when your e-mail address changes—we don't want to lose contact!

What a Legacy!

Would you like to be someone who helped protect the rarest ecosystem in British Columbia? And the 45 endangered species that live there?

You do just that when you leave a bequest to the Salt Spring Island Conservancy. Living on this amazing island, with the Coastal Douglas Fir ecosystem all around us, most of us don't realize that this rare combination of land and climate is limited to just the inner south coast. Only 2% of this ecosystem is protected by parks and nature reserves. The rest is under pressure from our growing population—so our work is more urgent than ever. Small or large, every gift helps us build a strong local conservation organization, dedicated to protecting the natural environment of the island forever.

Ask for our brochure, "Giving for the Future," or pick up a copy from your financial advisor. It is also available on our web site.

Donating is Now Just a Click Away

We opened a CanadaHelps account earlier this year, making it really easy for donors who would rather charge donations to their credit card through a web site. Clicking on the CanadaHelps icon on the front page of our web site takes you straight to the SSI Conservancy donation form on the CanadaHelps web site. If you would like to make monthly donations throughout the year it is easy to set up a schedule for charging your credit card. You can make changes to your donation schedule or amount at any time. Donors receive a charitable donation receipt by e-mail immediately, directly from CanadaHelps. CanadaHelps retains a 3% administration fee, but there are no other charges for services, such as processing the charitable receipts or selling donated securities (which can be donated through the web site as well). For more on CanadaHelps: www.canadahelps.org

Monthly Donations from an Account

(rather than a credit card)

If you would like to set up a monthly donation as an automatic withdrawal from your bank account we can set that up as well. Just contact us for the form to fill in, which we can mail or e-mail to you.

The great thing about monthly donations, no matter which route you take, is that you can spread out the cost over the year. Even small amounts (even \$5), when given every month, add up to significant support by the end of the year—and we appreciate them all the more because we know how much will be available to us each month. For monthly donors, we send out one tax receipt for the total amount in December each year.

Wrong Addresses Cost Us 10 Times More

When we mail your ACORN to an address that is no longer correct, the post office charges us \$2.32 for each returned piece. It cost us 25 cents to mail it under the publications mail rates, but part of that agreement is that we have to pay for returns. So, we end up investing \$2.57 cents in postage per ACORN if we don't have your correct address. That's my long-winded explanation for asking that you let us know when you move so that we can keep our records up to date.

So.....Electronic Acorns Anyone?

More and more people prefer their ACORNs by e-mail so if you would like to switch away from a paper copy, just let me know: ssic@saltspringconservancy.ca

~ Linda Gilkeson



New directors welcomed

Three Cheers for Five New Directors!

Members at our June AGM chose new directors after a hardly fought election campaign. Here is a quick profile:

Paul Burke

Artist Paul has lived on SSI for 13 years. With his wife Anna Gustafson, they built and run Blue Horse Gallery. Paul has been interested in environmental education for many years and has volunteered in classrooms in Vancouver and on Salt Spring Island. He has worked with our Stewards in Training school program and has been a member of the SSIC Education committee for 5 years. He is an enthusiastic amateur naturalist.

Susan Hannon



A retired professor of terrestrial ecology, Susan moved to SSI permanently in January. She taught ornithology, animal behaviour, ecology and conservation at the University of Alberta for 25 years. Her most recent research centred on the effects of forest fragmentation on birds. She served on scientific advisory panels for

government, forestry corporations and conservation groups (e.g. Yellowstone to Yukon Conservation Initiative). Susan was an active researcher in the Sustainable Forest Network in Alberta and is now active in Garry oak conservation. She chairs the SSIC Stewardship Committee.

Donna Martin

Community activist Donna moved to SSI over 30 years ago. She has wide-ranging community service. She has worked at the recycle depot where she organized the first toxic waste collection program, and has been on the Highland Water Committee for six years. Donna led the Save Walker Hook Campaign. In 2008 she organized a major shoreline clean-up effort at North Beach and Walker Hook Roads, with the support of MOT, CRD and the SSIC. Donna has been an active member of the Conservancy.



Maureen Milburn

A retired art historian, Maureen has lived on SSI for 28 years.



She was a founding member and four-time president of the Conservancy and has chaired our Covenants committee. She has served on the board of the Land Trust Alliance of BC, the Islands Trust Advisory Planning Commission, and the board of the Community Planning Association. She organized and led the Crown Lands Use coalition in the 1980s and in the early

1990s, negotiated purchase of the Mill Farm regional park. Maureen earned an Islands Trust Community Stewardship award in 2002 for negotiating the covenant for the Maxwell Lake Watershed. She is chairing our Land Restoration and Management Committee and is on the Acquisitions committee as well.

John Sprague

A retired water pollution biologist, John has lived on SSI for 15 years. John has put his expertise in water biology to excellent use for the community. Relying on his scientific judgement and award winning writing abilities are the Ganges Sewer Local Service Committee, Cusheon Lake Watershed Steering Committee, Islands Trust Advisory Planning Commission, and the Water Preservation Society. Some years ago John taught another nominee, Susan Hannon -- it's a small world!



The downside of all of this is the retirement of 5 people who gave us their time and talents so generously. Samantha Beare was Treasurer for her 9 years on the Board. Brian Smallshaw was a director for 5 years, Maxine and Steve Leichter for 4 years and Jean Brouard for 2 years. We are deeply grateful for all the work they did for the SSI Conservancy.



Fundraiser

Upcoming Events

Join us for our 2009 Benefit October 15th Celebrating 14 Years of Conservation on Salt Spring

Starring Michael Ableman, organic grower extraordinaire, speaking on: **Thinking Like An Island**

Living on a small island provides us with clear, tangible and daily reminders of the limits of trying to live sustainably. Nothing illustrates our island vulnerability more than our food and how we secure it. For most of us on Salt Spring, only a tiny fraction of what we eat is produced here while the majority travels long distances to our shores at high cost in terms of energy and quality.

This is a rare opportunity to hear Michael Ableman, who was described in a Sierra Club article as a “gracious rebel who knows that industrialized farming wrings the life out of both soil and communities”. Michael will show that how we feed ourselves also has critical implications for how we live in nature. Ultimately, it has an impact on our conservation efforts, and shapes the ways we treat our landscapes and the organisms they support. The feedback loop on small islands like ours is immediate; every human interaction, every morsel of food and bit of waste has clear links and impacts.

Venue: Artspring

Doors open: 6:30 pm for refreshments, including a cornucopia of fall fruit pies baked by volunteers, and a silent auction set up in the lobby.

Main event: 7:30 pm starting with a live auction for five choice items, followed by our speaker.

Tickets: \$16 each. On sale at the Artspring box office and the SSI Conservancy office. It is open seating so come early, get a good seat, put in your auction bids and enjoy the refreshments and displays.



Michael Ableman

Sept 25th (Friday) - Kayaking from Salt Spring to Skagway. Hear a fascinating tale by Jack Rosen about his recent expedition. He left Salt Spring on April 2nd, covered 1200 nautical miles and arrived in Skagway, Alaska 51 days later. Jack tells a story of paddling through British Columbia's coastal wilderness to Alaska's bountiful waterways. Wildlife, waterfalls, whales, and whelks--stories of storms, pristine waterways, wildlife encounters & camping adventures. In short, a trip of a lifetime! "I've paddled for over 30 years along the coasts of B.C, Patagonia, Mexico and Costa Rica, but this Inside Passage excursion marked a milestone--living that long in the wilderness allowed an insight and relationship with nature that I'll never take for granted."

Community Gospel Hall, 7 pm. Admission by donation.

October 15th (Thursday) - Thinking Like An Island: SSIC Annual Benefit, with guest speaker Michael Ableman. Artspring. 7:30. Tickets \$16 from Artspring box office and SSI Conservancy office.

November 27th (Friday) A personal account of life in the mountains of B.C. by author Chris Czajkowski. Lion's Hall. 7:00 pm. Admission by donation.

www.saltspringconservancy.ca

NEW and Improved Web Site (Same Old Address)

Check out the new SSI Conservancy web site, which has been overhauled and updated by Terri Bibby. It features a lot of new material on native species on Salt Spring and our work with local species at risk. There is detailed information on the Stewards in Training school program, including the complete program manual, and improved information for donors, who can now donate on-line through the web site. We will continue to update and improve the site so let us know what you think.



Dwindling Wings



Common nighthawk on rock

photo by Jared Hobbs

Birds winged into my heart when I was very young, and stayed. I'm inexpressively sad to know that every year there are fewer of them. With a fearful avidity akin to scanning obituaries for news of friends, I read the statistics about North American birds. As my eyes and ears record the comings and goings of birds on our little farm, I'm anxious over every suggestion of decline, irrationally cheered by every anecdote of abundance.

Lately I've been especially apprehensive about swallows. I like them tremendously. They are exquisitely graceful masters of flying, the quintessential skill of birds. (Scientists tell me that ostriches and penguins and kiwis are birds, too, a fact I accept with hidden reluctance. To me they are one birdie short of making the cut. They are curiosities, caricatures. Dodos.) Barn swallows are great neighbours, too, tolerating my use of their barn as well as I accept their use of mine, and teaching their young to follow me around the orchard as my tree-tending, mowing and irrigating startle insects out of hiding.

Conservancy biologist Laura Matthias wrote in the *Driftwood* this summer that barn swallows are now listed by the Province as "threatened." Canada-wide declines have been severe, with average yearly declines of 3.3% from 1968 to 2006 and average annual declines in the 23 years from 1986 to 2006 of 6.1%. No one knows why. Most guesses focus on possible insect shortages and general declines in buildings, hollow trees and other places good for nesting.

Last winter, Birdwatch Canada reported that 14 out of 18 kinds of Canadian birds that feed on insects in the air have suffered significant losses. Declines are greater in Canada than in the U.S., and greater in the East than in the West. Species feeding higher in the air are worse off than those catching insects close to the ground or in the forest canopy. As examples of the categories, Salt Spring Island's common nighthawks (uncommon, actually) and two swifts (Vaux's and black) are high-elevation feeders; swallows and the purple martin hunt all open-air levels; and the western wood peewee and flycatchers hunt at or below tree-top level in the forest.

Long ago in New England I was fascinated by chimney swifts, hidden all day but thickly swirling like overgrown dragonflies at dusk. We were children then, playing hide-and-seek while fireflies winked and night herons squawked toward the salt marshes and swifts caught the last of daylight as it fled the rising dark. Now the swifts are almost gone, having lost 96% of their numbers in eastern Canada between 1968 and 2007. "You can't go home again," Tom Wolfe wrote in *Look Homeward, Angel*, and the fate of the chimney swift is but one more proof.

Robin Annschild, senior biologist with the Conservancy, found a common nighthawk nest on Mount Tuam this July while four or five adults stitched the late afternoon skies above. Other islanders saw or heard nighthawks this past summer as well. There were more, by far, in my first summers here in the early 1990s, and I'm told that a generation earlier farmers often flushed nighthawks from nests in pastures and mown hayfields. Hearsay and anecdote can be deeply misleading, but in this case science supports them. Canada-wide, nighthawk numbers have dropped since the start of counts in 1968, the rate accelerating after 1986. I wish I could put it all down to nostalgia and bad memory, but I can't. Neither can I ignore the scarcity of the "barfly bird," old "Quick-three-beers," the olive-sided flycatcher, or the purple martin.

Silent Springs and dwindling wings: these are a few of my unfavourite things.

~ Bob Weeden



Note: Bridgit Stutchbury's *The Silence of the Songbirds* (Harper Collins 2007) is a book with heart and good science.

The School Program needs volunteers now.
Please call 250-538-0318.

Youth Steward Profile: Kelsey Mech

Kelsey Mech, winner of the Conservancy's GISS Scholarship for 2009, spent grades five to nine living in a variety of countries in North, Central and South America as her family traveled 14,000 nautical miles on their forty-foot sailboat. She gained a keen appreciation for the plight of much of the world's people as well as how important it is to save the earth from the negative impacts of human actions. Her life work (all 18 years of it) has been dedicated to making a difference. She has already accomplished more than most adults I know.

Much of Kelsey's work has to do with education. I think she believes if people can get the information and really understand it, they will change their behaviors positively. She hopes to be a conservation biologist with a degree in either wildlife or marine biology. With her straight A average, drive, passion and wisdom she will be brilliant at what ever she decides to do. Everything Kelsey does relates to the Preserve and Protect mandate. She loves this earth. She makes one believe in the saying, "By wonder we are saved." She is doing her best and deserves to be acknowledged.

In Grade 11, Kelsey volunteered for the job of Youth Coordinator for the Salt Spring Energy Strategy group. She was the liaison student with the secondary and middle schools on education projects that had to do with climate change and greenhouse gas emissions. Concerned about climate change and environmental degradation, she came up with the idea and planned a full-day event to raise awareness and promote action. She was the head student coordinator for Environmental Action Day (EAD), held in February 2008 at Gulf Island Secondary School (GISS). She organized opening and closing speakers, and twenty-two workshops for this event. Six hundred students and staff and many members of the community were provided with presentations and interactive sessions under the categories of: Climate Change, Ecosystem Destruction, Consumerism, Food Issues in Our Community and more. The event featured a variety of high-profile presenters, including Dr. Andrew Weaver, award-winning professor of Earth and Ocean Sciences who was a key note speaker on Climate Change, Simon Jackson, founder and chair of the Spirit Bear Youth Coalition and Ron Wright, author of a Short History of Progress. I attended and I can tell you it was an incredible day filled with amazing speakers and workshops and it was Kelsey who made it happen.

The EAD had a strong emphasis on ACTION. Positive feedback from students and community members indicated many personal sustainable actions would be practiced in the long term. Several ways of increasing sustainability in the school and community were identified. As a follow-up



Kelsey at Science World

to this event, Kelsey founded and led the Environmental Action Group Encouraging Responsibility (EAGER) at GISS. This group is dedicated to tackling both long and short-term environmental projects. EAGER has planted and placed potted plants in every classroom, worked with staff and administration to reduce paper waste and increase the use of recycled paper, is currently implementing a composting program, and has acquired representation at the School Board's policy meetings. In the community, EAGER is collaborating with retail managers to promote eco-friendly shopping by working to eliminate the use of paper and plastic bags at the tills, and by publishing an environmentally friendly shopping guide.

For two years, Kelsey has been writing a monthly column for the Driftwood Weekender newspaper in which she has addressed important issues such as climate change, animal experimentation, wildlife trade, deforestation, consumerism and the Alberta Tar Sands. She has recently co-initiated a letter writing campaign on Salt Spring, directed at our federal government leaders to express concern about the environmental devastation of the Alberta Tar Sands.

In 2008 she served as a member on the Province's Climate Action Youth Dialogue, a member of the BC Youth Parliament and Salt Spring's Healthy Ecosystems Healthy Community Initiative. These are a few of the activities Kelsey has involved herself with, having to do with Climate Change, in the last few years. Kelsey is also the youngest committee member on the Governance Committee of the Conservancy. Did I also mention that she has a full time job of being a student, at which she excels? She is off to university and has won a scholarship.

I have worked with young people my entire working career. Kelsey is special in her dedication to the earth. She is a great model.

Salt Spring wins three stewardship awards



Jean Gelwicks accepts award from Trust Chair, Sheila Malcomson

The purpose of the Trust's Community Stewardship Award is to recognize individuals and groups for programs or actions that have made a significant contribution towards the object of the Trust ("to preserve and protect"). What a perfect fit this award is for the Conservancy's Stewards in Training school program which won one of the group awards. This program takes almost every student on Salt Spring, grade one – eight, every year, on all day nature field experiences into a variety of special places and eco-systems on Salt Spring Island and teaches them about how to best take care of their environment and be good stewards of the land.

This is done one class at a time. Students are involved in fun, hands on, curriculum based, outdoor learning experiences. Students are learning about nature....in nature (placed based learning). "The Conservancy is proud of this program and could not be more pleased about winning this Stewardship Award. We want to thank our three terrific school program coordinators, Sarah Bateman, Cate McEwen and Kris Fullbrook, and all our wonderful volunteers (this year over 50 of them) for all their dedication and hard work. We also want to give a huge thanks to Fernwood School for nominating us. As one volunteer remarked after a field trip, "They need more of this!" We could not agree more, said Gelwicks, School Committee chair.

But there is more good news. The Conservancy did a bit of their own nominating. They nominated Grade 12 student Kelsey Mech and Jackie Booth (posthumously) for individual awards and both won.

Kelsey is nothing short of incredible. She has a full time job (school) at which she excels (straight As) and she still manages to do more volunteer work than most adults. (See page 5 for a full profile).

Jackie Booth died this April very unexpected and so it is

extremely fitting, both sweet and sad at the same time, that she was awarded (posthumously) what the Conservancy so wishes she could have received in person. Jackie Booth was well known and well loved by all who worked in conservation on Salt Spring in the past 15 years.

She was a pioneer in the use of GIS for ecosystem mapping. She was always ready to help with any mapping problems. Although her professional focus was on marine resource mapping and conservation, Jackie helped many different groups with their maps. She was an active volunteer and helped establish and lead the Fulford Elementary School Nature Club. She worked with Garry Holman and Briony Penn to establish the South and West Conservation Group on Salt Spring - this continued during the Texada battles, when she hosted many of the strategy meetings in her home. The groups she assisted varied from Salmon Enhancement to Water Bird Watch, from great blue herons to burweed - if the topic had a conservation focus then she usually volunteered.

Jacky will be sorely missed by her friends and colleagues.



Broom Basher's Hall of Fame



Gwen McDonald gets tough on broom

When people return the broom pullers they have borrowed we often hear of feats of broom removal. One such tale came from Gwen McDonald, who cleared nearly 1 ½ acres of broom this summer. The results, as you see here, are 4 piles of dead broom and a broom-less background. Gwen claims there are great athletic advantages to broom clearing, including "nicely sculpted biceps" that she never had before. Her challenge on this site was the steep slope, which made it hard to figure out where to put the puller for best advantage. Too many times she found herself falling backwards down the slope as the broom root suddenly popped out of the ground. Her tips: Always wear blue jeans and long sleeves -- shin pads would be great if you have them!

Rabbit-proofing your garden



Feral European hares (the big ones with solid colours) have lopped around a few neighbourhood lawns for the whole 19 years I've lived on Salt Spring Island. In the past 2 years a small, mottled brown rabbit with a cotton-puff tail has shown up in more places and in bigger numbers. People who have lived here 40 years or more recall seeing them decades ago, and some remember hunting them when the cottontails were numerous.

Biologists say the first Eastern cottontail showed up in BC in 1952, possibly from rabbits stocked in 1927 and 1931 for hunters in Washington State. Some were released near Sooke in 1964, too, and progeny of that bunch have spread up the east side of Vancouver Island as far as Sayward. Whatever their origin and Island history, we've got them now. With deer leaping over and rabbits squeezing under, gardening is about to become very interesting on our little rock. They'll be a boon to hawks and owls, but experience 'round the world gives little hope that enough rabbits will become raptorial repasts to make much difference in "hares apparent." (Puns trump biology every time.)

The website of the Garry Oak Ecosystems Recovery Team (Victoria) has another warning: cottontails eat things in Garry oak meadows, too, including oak seedlings and rare plants like the yellow montane violet recently discovered here by Salt Spring Island Conservancy biologists. In a small Garry oak meadow with patches of thick brush – broom, for instance – around it, rabbits could make life even tougher for flowers and seedlings.

In the interest of saving some vegetables for local people to eat, I offer these instructions for fool-proof garden fences:

Dig a trench four feet deep around your garden. Dig holes for 14-foot I-beam steel posts, which extend from two feet below the bottom of the trench to eight feet above the ground. (Rabbits don't jump that high, but you might as well keep out deer, too.) Bolt a 10-foot cyclone fence to the posts, leaving two feet of wire to curve outward from the bottom

of the I-beam. Pin folded part securely. Backfill the trench with broken glass layered every four inches with cement reinforcing web. Make sure no rabbits are inside when you secure the fence. Sprinkle myxomatosis powder at rates of 1 litre per foot just outside the fence.

Do not put in gates; if they aren't there they can't be left open. Try to get in. If you can, rebuild with prison wire wound among cyclone wire meshes. Parachute a full-time gardener inside. A padlocked hatch installed into the fence will allow passage of water, food and recent ACORNS. Wastes are recycled in the garden, naturally.

Build a dog-proof fence around the backfilled trench to allow a four-foot runway for caged killer dogs. If you don't want to hurt the cottontails use toothless dogs that snarl and bark constantly. You could omit the dogs. Instead, install an electrified groove into which a robotic rabbit, drenched in estrogens, moves very fast. One model stays ahead of the sprinting male rabbits, which die of exhaustion. Another allows bucks to catch it at intervals. Again, the males die of exhaustion.

You could consider giving up gardening and buying veggies from a commercial grower who has fenced (see above) five acres.

~ Bob Weeden 

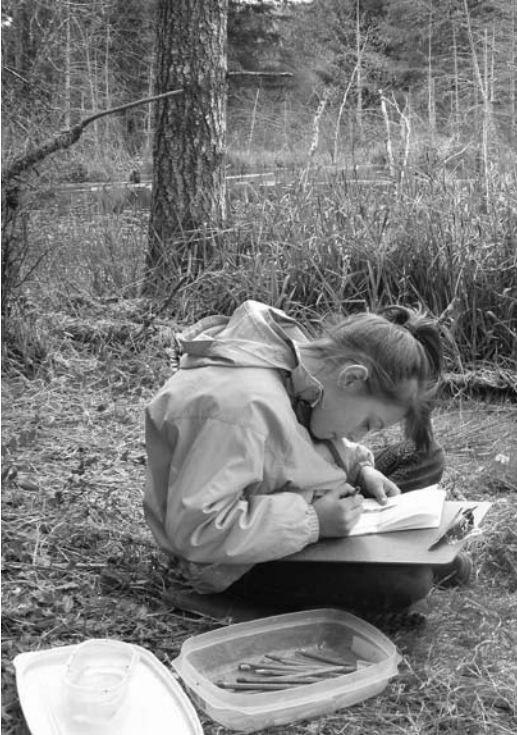
Special Thanks for a Special Dononation

Ian Gidney, of Go Wild Zodiac Tours, donated 3 days of zodiac trips in April as a fundraiser for the SSIC—and every day the boat was filled. Participants soon found they were in for an amazing tour of the marine areas around the islands. Marine biologist, David Denning, also travelled with the tours, providing a wealth of information about local marine wildlife and ecosystems. Judging by the appreciative comments heard from those who were lucky enough to get a seat on one those voyages, it was a wonderful experience. Many, many thanks to Ian and to David!

Stewards in Training to visit Cusheon Cove

“If facts are the seeds that later produce knowledge and wisdom, then the emotions and impressions of the senses are the fertile soil in which the seeds must grow.”

~ Rachel Carson, *A Sense of Wonder*, 1956



Western Painted Turtle Activities

As part of our Habitat Stewardship program at the Salt Spring Island Conservancy, we have been looking for the endangered Western Painted Turtle on the island. With the help of numerous landowners and volunteers, we have had great success in learning more about these turtles and their needs.

As many people know, there is a population of the turtles at Stowel Lake. The turtles use the public access beach for their communal nesting grounds, laying eggs throughout June. They dig nests in the sand where they deposit their eggs. This year, we placed cages over some of the known nesting sites, hoping to alert beach goers of the presence of the nests and to protect the nests from being disturbed. We had a number of keen local residents who helped to monitor the turtles and who reported nesting sightings. These reports were very helpful. The turtles usually hatch at the end of the summer, but may stay in the nests until spring. If you see any hatchling turtles popping out of the sand, we are very interested in hearing from you.

Turtles also require undisturbed basking sites to get out of the water so that they can warm up in the sunshine and gain energy for other activities like feeding, mating, and egg-laying. Available basking sites is often the one thing that limits population growth for turtles. Many of our lakes and wetlands have been ‘cleaned’ out of trees and floating logs that turtles could use. These are important features to leave in place for turtles and many other critters. With the generous help of local landowners and volunteers, we were able to install two cedar logs in Stowel Lake as additional basking sites for the turtles.

As interest and knowledge of the turtles grows, we hope that we will continue to see healthy populations of the turtles at Stowel Lake and elsewhere on the island into the future. If you have other turtle sightings on the island, particularly nesting sites, please contact the Salt Spring Island Conservancy at 538-0318 or info@saltspringconservancy.ca.

Want to learn how to make rope from stinging nettles, how to whittle wood, the history of Cushion Cove and the proper use of a compass, or see Chris Hatfield’s pottery fragments? If the answer is yes, the Stewards in Training School Program needs you.

The School Committee of the Conservancy will be running the grade 4/5 Cusheon Cove program on Oct 1, 6, 7, 8. We will give you all the training you need. We need people to teach each of the 4 learning stations and another 4 volunteers to sheppard students from station to station.

We need 8 volunteers for each of the 9 field trips. The location is beautiful in the fall, the students fantastic and the day will be full of fun activities that everyone enjoys. If you are available to volunteer for even one day (9:30 am – 2:30 pm), please contact the Conservancy office (250) 538-0318 or Sarah Bateman at (250) 653- 4675. You won’t regret it.

The School Committee would like to thank all those people who supported the Stewards in Training School Program by buying 2009 Calendars.

Good Business...

...and Our Fine Funders

Thank you to all of our business members for your support!

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To the granting and funding organizations that support our work, many thanks!

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 Province of BC Direct Access Program
 TD Friends of the Environment Foundation
 Nature Canada and Park Canada (Parks & People Program)
 Mountain Equipment Co-op
 The Government of Canada Habitat Stewardship Program for Species at Risk
 Public Conservation Assistance Fund
 BC Transmission Corporation
 BC Ministry of Environment



Snake found at Ford Lake

The Acorn is the newsletter of the Salt Spring Island Conservancy, a local non-profit society supporting and enabling voluntary preservation and restoration of the natural environment of Salt Spring Island and surrounding waters. We welcome your feedback and contributions, by email to ssic@saltspringconservancy.ca or by regular mail. Opinions expressed here are the authors', not subject to Conservancy approval.

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