



# the Heron



Winter 2016-2017 A newsletter from the Islands Trust Fund, a conservancy for Canada's Islands in the Salish Sea



Land steward Karin Fischer shows us her favorite morning coffee spot under the oak trees. Photo K. Emmings  
Inset: Camas flowers in bloom at Fischer Covenant on Hornby Island

## Hornby Island Land Steward Permanently Protects Sensitive Garry Oak Habitat

Karin Fischer is the most recent land steward to protect fragile island ecosystems through a conservation covenant. Karin's special ridgetop property on the south side of Hornby Island is home to towering veteran Douglas-fir trees and undulating Garry oak meadows that erupt every spring with native grasses, chocolate lilies, white fawn lilies, camas lilies and shooting stars. Her property provides habitat for bald eagles, garter snakes, giant silkworm moths, the propertius duskywing butterfly and western pondhawk dragonfly, both provincially rare and coastal wood fern, a federally listed Species of Special Concern. A conservation covenant is now registered over 6.12 ha (15.1 acres) of the property, protecting it forever from development and human disturbance. Conservancy Hornby Island co-holds the covenant with the Islands Trust Fund and played a key role in developing the covenant with Karin.

Karin and her husband purchased the Hornby Island property in 1980 after moving from Geneva, Switzerland. In 1979, they visited coastal B.C., renting a car and touring the Gulf Islands searching for their new home. Originally planning on retiring on Gabriola Island, they ventured farther north, discovering and falling in love with Hornby Island and the property Karin has now protected. The couple returned to Geneva, packed their belongings and travelled back to Canada via the Panama Canal, settling in their new Hornby Island paradise where Karin lived with her husband until his passing nine years ago.

"I have no children, and with my husband gone I wanted to be sure the property is protected," says Karin. "I have my first cup of coffee under the oak trees. I enjoy watching the deer, especially the young fawns in the spring," she continues. "In the winter when the leaves fall off the trees and it snows, the landscape looks like a black and white painting. It is just beautiful, it is very special."

The second Islands Trust Fund conservation covenant registered on Hornby Island, Karin's property provides habitat connectivity that allows animals, including the deer she loves, to travel across the landscape. The protection of this property is a tremendous gift to nature and to the community of Hornby Island. "I was afraid that if I did not put a covenant on the land it would be developed and all of the natural features would be lost," says Karin. "I am very grateful to the Islands Trust Fund, I feel reassured to know the property is protected."

### About Garry Oak Ecosystems

- Garry oak ecosystems are found on southeast Vancouver Island, the Gulf Islands and in two locations in the Fraser Valley. They are also found in Washington, Oregon and California (often referred to as white oak). They exist nowhere else in the world.
- Hornby Island is in the northernmost part of the range for Garry oak ecosystems.
- Garry oak woodland and terrestrial herbaceous ecosystems of the southeast coast are rare, fragile and also vanishing under the pressure of human settlement.
- Today, less than 5% of the Garry oak ecosystems in Canada remain in a near-natural state.
- More than one-fifth of the rarest plants in B.C. are found in Garry oak ecosystems.
- More than 100 federally and provincially listed 'species at risk' live in Garry oak ecosystems.





Pictured: Tara and Dan Hodgins, Farm Managers, Clam Bay Farms

## Clam Bay Farms Protects Mature Forest

### Re-zoning results in nature protection

On October 26, 2015, the owners of Clam Bay Farms signed a conservation covenant with the Islands Trust Fund protecting more than eight hectares of endangered forest ecosystems adjacent to Clam Bay Road on North Pender Island.

The Clam Bay Conservation Covenant permanently protects mature mixed stands of Douglas-fir, Western redcedar, grand fir and bigleaf maple, including two exceptional veteran Douglas-fir trees estimated to be 500 and 800 years old. The covenant protects important habitat for a wide diversity of native species, such as fairyslippers and coralroot orchids and Western Tanager, a forest songbird.

“We find peace and serenity in spending time in the forest,” said Dan and Tara Hodgins, the on-site managers of Clam Bay Farms.

*“Knowing that the lush forest, mosses and veteran trees of the property will be permanently protected is a source of great pride for the owners and the Clam Bay Farms team.”*

The Clam Bay Conservation Covenant extends the network of protected places on North Pender Island, enabling forest species to move freely and safely through a variety of habitats.

To the west is the Found Road Ocean Access managed by the Pender Islands Parks and Recreation Commission and a 30 hectare covenant held by the North Pender Island Local Trust Committee restricting tree-cutting. To the east, a one-hectare conservation covenant held by the Islands Trust Fund follows the southern side of Clam Bay Road. The Clam Bay Conservation Covenant was

a requirement of a re-zoning application submitted to the Islands Trust. The landowner chose the Islands Trust Fund to hold the covenant and contributed to the Islands Trust Fund’s Covenant Management and Defence Fund to assist with long-term protection and management of covenanted lands.

Clam Bay Farms provides an example of a property where multiple values and uses – ecological, agricultural and residential – are integrated and legally formalized through both zoning and a conservation covenant.



Western tanagers nest only in second-growth and mature conifer and mixed forests.  
Photo: D. Bend



## Fairyslipper Forest Nature Reserve Campaign – the final year!

Help support an island community with an inspiring conservation vision

Three partners, Islands Trust Fund, Thetis Island Nature Conservancy and Cowichan Community Land Trust are now in the final year of a three year campaign to raise \$560,000 to acquire Fairyslipper Forest – 16 hectares (40 acres) of rare, maturing second growth Coastal Douglas-fir forest on Thetis Island. Less than nine percent of the Coastal Douglas-fir Biogeoclimatic Zone is protected, and what remains is at high risk of being lost to development. This is especially significant on Thetis Island, where the majority of the island is privately owned, and only one percent of the island’s natural area is protected.

This campaign is creating the first publicly accessible protected area on Thetis Island, offering a recreational trail and serving as an outdoor classroom for island youth. The property also forms part of an important watershed, retaining and filtering water as it moves down Burchell Hill.

Contributing to this campaign gives you a place in history. You can pay forward your delight in hiking under the grand Arbutus and towering Douglas-fir trees of Thetis Island. Imagine your children or grandchildren visiting the same forest decades later, finally a recovered old growth Douglas-fir forest – one of the last remaining in the world. Savour the feeling that you helped make it happen.

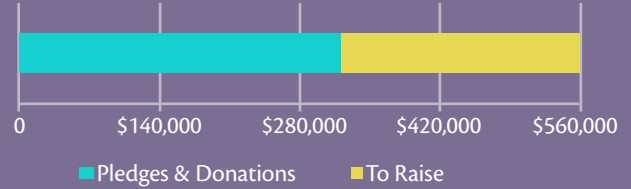
The leadership, forethought and generosity for conservation on Thetis Island are inspiring. We are so close to making this community nature reserve a reality - please consider a donation to support the protection of Fairyslipper Forest.

To learn more about Fairyslipper Forest visit [www.IslandsTrustFund.bc.ca/Fairyslipper](http://www.IslandsTrustFund.bc.ca/Fairyslipper) or [www.ThetisIslandNatureConservancy.org](http://www.ThetisIslandNatureConservancy.org)

### The Goal:

To raise \$ 560, 000 to acquire 16-hectares of Coastal Douglas-fir forest by June, 2017!

### Progress to date:



Fairyslipper Forest is home to species-at-risk such as the Common Nighthawk (*Chordeiles minor*), Northern Red-legged Frog (*Rana aurora*) and Pacific Sideband Snail (*Monadenia fidelis*). Once protected, they will forever have a safe place to call home.

See back cover for donation options



Northern Red-legged Frog, Photo K. Mayes

### Campaign Background:

In 2014, the Thetis Island Nature Conservancy (ThINC), the Cowichan Land Trust and the Islands Trust Fund began fundraising to protect the ecological values of the lower Burchell Hill property - named after the fairyslipper orchid, *Calypso bulbosa*, that dots the forest floor every spring.

Once the Trust Fund Board acquires the property as a nature reserve, two local land trusts will jointly hold a conservation covenant to further ensure its permanent protection. The terms of the covenant will allow only low impact recreational, scientific and educational activities on the land.



Top left: Ruby Eliason, aged 7, peers through a cedar tree root, Photo C. Oberg  
Above: Fairyslipper Orchids, Photo R. Underhill



Pender Island Conservancy Association (PICA) board members and ITF staff celebrating the successful installation of three interpretive panels at Medicine Beach Nature Sanctuary. Pictured left to right: Graham Boffey (PICA President, project leader), Davy Joel Rippner (Webmaster/Media), Nuala Murphy (ITF Property Management Specialist), Ursula Poepel (PICA Treasurer), Sara Steil (PICA), Eleanor Brownlee (PICA Vice President), Patti Badcock (PICA). Missing: Rhondda Porter (PICA Secretary) and Elizabeth Miles (PICA).

## Managing Protected Areas

Legal protection is only the first step in land conservation. The Islands Trust Fund promises to protect land entrusted to us in perpetuity, which requires long term, science-based management. We believe the generations that follow us should have opportunities to witness the same beauty and ecological diversity we see today.

Our priority with each property is protection and management of the ecosystems and natural features. However, some properties, like the Medicine Beach Nature Sanctuary on North Pender, are also managed for secondary purposes such as low-impact recreation and scenic views. We often partner with local conservancies, other stewardship organizations and volunteers to care for our nature reserves. Three newly installed interpretive panels are a great example of conservation partnerships at work.

### Medicine Beach Nature Sanctuary (E,HO,), North Pender (S,DÁYES)

Medicine Beach Nature Sanctuary is an 8.44 hectare (20.12 acres) property on North Pender Island, within the traditional territory of Coast Salish First Nations. Protected as a nature reserve in 1995, the property features Coastal Douglas-fir forests, foreshore habitat for forage fish, coastal bluffs, a brackish marsh and a registered archeological site protected under the British Columbia Heritage Conservation Act.

Medicine Beach is a popular destination for residents and visitors to picnic, kayak, swim, watch birds and walk dogs. The bluff trail offers a magnificent view to and beyond the mouth of Bedwell Harbour. A sandy beach containing a significant archaeological midden encloses a brackish marsh. Great Blue



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Heron, Western Grebe and Belted Kingfisher are just some of the bird species visitors see in the marsh. The marsh is a mix of fresh water runoff from forested uplands and salt water from incoming tides, an exceptionally rare ecosystem in the Gulf Islands. The marsh is a sanctuary for migrating and breeding bird populations and provides habitat for Henderson’s Checker Mallow, a flowering species of provincial concern.

Most visitors to Medicine Beach are respectful of the Sanctuary’s fragile coastal ecosystems, yet some seem unaware that running dogs off leash, collecting driftwood and building driftwood structures can undermine the ecological values they have come to enjoy and we are partnering to protect.

To foster greater appreciation of the beach, forests and marsh, beyond their obvious beauty, Pender Island Conservancy Association’s (PICA) President Graham Boffey spearheaded the design and installation of three interpretive panels at the Medicine Beach Nature Sanctuary. Successfully installed in June 2016, the panels are a joint initiative between the Islands Trust Fund and PICA. Graham consulted with Tsartlip First Nation elder and SENĆOŦEN language specialist John Elliott as well as Ramona de Graff, a forage fish specialist. The Islands Trust Fund worked with local designer Juniper English to finalize the layout and images. Local woodsmith Ben Symons constructed the kiosks using cedar milled on Pender Island. The results are three beautiful, informative interpretive panels that tell the full conservation story on Medicine Beach – past, present and future.

And how are the panels working? “We have had really favorable comments about them, they certainly catch people’s eye,” says Graham. “When I’ve been down at Medicine Beach, there is lots of interest, especially with tourists. Hopefully the intent of the panels reaches the community and visitors as well.”

## Protecting Medicine Beach



The Sanctuary is under the stewardship of the Islands Trust Fund and protected by a conservation covenant held by the Nature Conservancy of Canada (NCC) and Habitat Acquisition Trust (HAT). The Pender Islands Conservation Association (PICA) is the management group. Together, the partners actively protect natural features in the sanctuary.

You can help protect coastal areas by leashing dogs, limiting disturbance to shorelines, leaving plants and sea shells and taking only pictures. If you are travelling or arriving by boat or kayak, avoid mooring on shore or paddling too close to marine life and shore birds.

### FORAGE FISH

**FORAGE FISH SPECIES**

**Medicine Beach** has been identified as a spawning beach for surf smelt (*Hypomesus pretiosus*), a critical forage fish species in the Salish Sea.

Forage fish are small schooling fish species that feed on plankton. Forage fish serve an essential role in marine ecosystems by transferring energy from lower levels of the food web as food for higher level larger predatory fish, marine mammals and seabirds. Forage fish are also harvested for human consumption.

Surf smelt are found in many coastal estuaries along the Pacific Coast. Smelt grow to an average length of 15 centimetres, and females are slightly larger than the males. Most surf smelt spawn in their second year and live a maximum of five years.

Spawning occurs in the hours before a high tide. Surf smelt deposit eggs high on the beach in the intertidal zone where rising tides bury and protect fertilized eggs.

Upon hatching, the larvae migrate to surface waters. Young fish require sub-tidal beds of kelp and seaweeds for protection during the rearing stage and remain in the near shore area.

Surf smelt do not die after spawning and may spawn repeatedly during the spawning season and in subsequent years. The population of surf smelt in the Salish Sea is declining and spawning habitats, including Medicine Beach, are protected under Section 35 of the Federal Fisheries Act.

### ECOLOGICAL IMPORTANCE

**Medicine Beach Nature Sanctuary** is a 8.44 hectare (20.12 acre) protected area in the endangered Coastal Douglas-fir biogeoclimatic zone. The Sanctuary includes a 2 hectare (5 acre) brackish marsh, coastal bluffs and forested uplands.

Brackish marsh, where fresh water dilutes sea water in wetlands, is uncommon on the Gulf Islands. This marsh contains rare, diverse and constantly changing ecological communities including: red alder - skunk cabbage); swamp, cattail marsh and seashore saltgrass, as well as Henderson’s checker-mallow); (Blue listed in BC as species of special concern).

The coastal bluff features Douglas-fir and arbutus trees); and wildflowers such as nodding onion and twinflower).

The upland forest has several rare ecological communities including: Garry oak and arbutus; Douglas-fir; grand fir, and Oregon-grape; and western redcedar, Douglas-fir and Oregon-grape.

Shingle and shattered bedrock forms the beach and provides habitat and shelter for marine life including crab, shellfish, and spawning grounds for forage fish.

Approximately 80 species of birds have been identified in the Sanctuary including: Double-crested Cormorant, Brandt’s Cormorant, Western Grebe); Great Blue Heron and Virginia Rail).

The Sanctuary is owned by the Islands Trust Fund, and protected by a conservation covenant held by the Nature Conservancy of Canada and Habitat Acquisition Trust. The Pender Islands Conservation Association is the management group.

Photo source: NOAA

## Humpback Comeback

### Conservation efforts pay off for humpback whales

Humpback whales, once hunted to the verge of extinction, are now making a spectacular comeback in the Salish Sea. The Pacific Whale Watching Association reports a record number of humpback whale sightings off British Columbia's south coast for the summer of 2016.

The summer range of the North Pacific humpback population extends along the full length of the west coast of British Columbia to northwestern Alaska. Humpback whales spend summers feeding in cool, temperate waters. In the winter they migrate to warm, tropical waters to mate and calve. As their population recovers, these whales are in search of safe habitat with an ample and sustainable food supply.

The North Pacific humpback population is recovering at a moderate rate, but population numbers are still small compared to pre-whaling estimates. The species was commercially hunted until the mid-1960's in this region. A sustained humpback comeback in the Salish Sea requires public education and stewardship including responsible whale watching and boating and developing a sighting and incident response network.

<sup>1</sup>Source: Marine Education and Research Society, <http://www.mersociety.org/researchhumpbacks.htm>. Referenced October 14, 2016.



### A Whale of a Tale - Humpback Facts

- Humpback whales are the second largest animal on Earth, after blue whales.
- Humpback whales have been documented performing 'altruistic' behaviour, rescuing and defending other whales, seals and marine life from transient killer whale attacks.
- Major threats to humpback whales include entanglement in fishing gear, vessel strikes and potential prey shortage.
- The humpback comeback on the B.C. coast could increase risk of collisions with boats. Humpback whales do not have biosonar capabilities. Unlike the killer and gray whales boaters are accustomed to viewing, humpbacks feed in random patterns and can breach unexpectedly.
- 'See a Blow? Go Slow!' What do you do if you see a blow? Boaters-slow down to seven knots or less when a whale blow is spotted within 400 meters. If a whale surfaces within 100 metres, place your engine in neutral or off. Kayakers, leave plenty of room!
- Lucky enough to see a humpback whale? Take a picture and share it on social media #humpbackcomeback.

## Giving Tuesday – a Global Movement

### One day defined by gratitude and generosity

On November 29, be part of something BIG! Join a movement dedicated to giving back. The day after Black Friday and Cyber Monday, millions of people counteract consumerism by giving back to the causes they care about. It is a day where charities, companies and individuals share commitments, rally for favourite causes and think about others.

This Giving Tuesday, we ask you to consider a gift in support of land conservation in the islands in the Salish Sea. Please see the back page for donation options or visit our website at [www.islandstrustfund.bc.ca](http://www.islandstrustfund.bc.ca). Spread the word by sharing your intentions for Giving Tuesday. Talk to your neighbours, friends and family and tell them why you support land conservation and what your gift gives back to you.

Want to help protect land in the islands but you have never donated before? Join a movement of other Canadians donating for the first time this Giving Tuesday!

**GivingTuesday**



**November 29, 2016**

**Take an #un.sel.fie** *Noun (uhn-self-fee)!*

A show of support for GivingTuesday. Take a pic, tag it #unselfie, #GivingTuesdayCA, #SalishSea and upload it to your Facebook or Twitter profile from now until November 29.

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## Designating your Donation

### Thetis Island Acquisition Fund

Your donation to the Thetis Island Acquisition Fund will help us protect Fairyslipper Forest as a nature reserve. We have seven months to complete this campaign! See page 3 for more details.

### Opportunity Fund

Your donation to the Opportunity Fund will help island conservancies seize new opportunities to protect our most endangered landscapes. We relay every dollar of your donation to the most worthy local conservation projects. Some successful projects are described here:

[www.islandstrustfund.bc.ca/donate/please-help-our-campaigns.aspx](http://www.islandstrustfund.bc.ca/donate/please-help-our-campaigns.aspx)

### Covenant Management and Defence Fund

Your donation will help to ensure the covenant areas the Islands Trust Fund protects in partnership with private landowners are well cared for, forever. By setting funds aside now, the Islands Trust Fund is preparing for any restoration or enforcement that may be required in the future.



## Around the Islands Photos from the field

Summer 2016 was busy for Islands Trust Fund staff. We had many opportunities to visit the Islands where we enjoyed meeting with our partners and taking in the natural beauty of the islands. See our photos from the field!



Crystal Oberg, Islands Trust Fund's Communications and Fundraising Specialist, is photobombed by the Pender Island Fire Department at the Pender Island Fall Fair.



Claire Olivier, Islands Trust Fund Legislative Clerk and Jennifer Eliason, Islands Trust Fund Manager, engage visitors with free cedar trees and an interpretive eelgrass game for kids at the Salt Spring Island Fall Fair.



Kate Emmings, Islands Trust Fund Ecosystem Protection Specialist, meets with Conservancy Hornby Island members Anna Zielinsky (left) and Tony Quin (centre)



Nuala Murphy, Islands Trust Fund Property Management Specialist, visits the Medicine Beach Nature Sanctuary on Pender Island



Kailey Strachan, age 13 and Tamara Strachan, age 11 visit the fairies at Lower Mount Erskine Nature Reserve, Salt Spring Island



Maddox Eliason, age 10, learns how to make a fish print at the Thetis Island Ocean Learn Fest, 2016 held by the Thetis Island Nature Conservancy

# Support island habitats. Donate today.

## Our 100% Promise

When you donate to the Islands Trust Fund, every dollar of your donation goes directly to protecting endangered island habitats.

All donations of \$20 or more will receive a tax receipt for Canadian income tax purposes. The Islands Trust Fund is a qualified donee under the *Income Tax Act*.

## Save time! Donate online!

<http://www.islandstrustfund.bc.ca/donate.aspx>

YES! I want to help protect natural habitat on the islands

\$50  \$100  \$250  \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Please designate my donation to:  Where most needed

Opportunity Fund  Covenant Management and Defence Fund

Lasqueti Island Acquisition Fund  Gambier Island Acquisition Fund

Fairyflipper Forest (Thetis Island Acquisition Fund)

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Yes, I am okay with public recognition of my donation.

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## Thank you for your support!

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