



The

Heron

A NEWSLETTER FROM THE ISLANDS TRUST FUND

SPRING 2010



Islands Trust Fund

20 Years of Collaboration for Island Conservation

It was May 17, 1990 when three trustees convened the inaugural meeting of the Trust Fund Board. They were determined to translate the Islands Trust's 'preserve and protect' mandate into direct results for the Strait of Georgia. By the year's end, they had already succeeded in protecting 72 hectares of Salt Spring Island forest.

Twenty years later, we invite you, our friends and partners, to take a moment to celebrate some of the major accomplishments the Islands Trust Fund could not have achieved without your help.

Together, we have protected 19 nature reserves and 58 conservation covenants, leaving a legacy of more than 990 hectares of sensitive habitat permanently protected for the future. We have protected treasured island landscapes; just a few of those include North Pender Island's Medicine Beach, Lasqueti Island's highest peak, Mt. Trematon, part of Denman Island's Morrison Marsh, and Gambier Island's Mt. Artaban.

We're hoping to celebrate our 20th anniversary with the unveiling of our 20th nature reserve — a jewel of a wetland on Bowen Island granted to us under the Province's Free Crown Grant program.

In the last decade, we've brought innovative land conservation tools to island landowners, such as British Columbia's first ever tax-incentive covenant program (NAPTEP) and inexpensive subdivision options for nature reserve donors (Section 99). We've also been the champions for some of the Islands Trust's most powerful planning tools for conservation, such as the Trust Area Ecosystem Mapping project.

The Islands Trust Fund has grown to become an essential link between island communities and the Provincial government, protecting cherished community treasures through the Free Crown Grant Program and spearheading several provincial park acquisitions. We've also strived to become vital partners to local island conservancies by supporting their work with our Opportunity Fund grants, and collaborating on regional conservation initiatives.



Fairy Fen, Bowen Island. Our 20th Nature Reserve anticipated in our 20th anniversary year. Photo by Patrick Clay.

As the Islands Trust Fund matures with experience, so does our approach to land conservation. The scientific basis for our work contained in the 2005-2010 Regional Conservation Plan is about to be updated for the next five years. In revising the plan, we're including the goals and priorities of the many conservation organizations working in the Islands Trust Area. The goal is to align our individual conservation efforts, creating a highly focused and effective partnership for land conservation in our region.

Two decades ago, those first Trust Fund Board members envisioned an organization that would have a positive influence on land conservation in the islands. Please work with us as we continue to fulfill and renew their original vision: to see the islands and waters of the Islands Trust Area serving as a sanctuary for all life, where intact ecosystems are maintained forever, and where islanders experience a deep personal connection to natural island landscapes.

Seasonal Delights for Nature Enthusiasts

Spring ... like a warm breath, sunshine dissolves the clouds and tensions of winter. Birds and children alike emerge from hiding, exuberant voices welcoming an entire season dedicated to starting afresh.

A sure sign of spring in the Gulf Islands is the explosion of wildflowers on rocky hilltops and grassy meadows. Green shoots seemingly grow right out of rocks and even the smallest soil pocket springs to life with colour. The spotlight of spring highlights the herbaceous ecosystems more brightly than any other.

What are Herbaceous Ecosystems?

The Herbaceous ecosystems so iconic to the Gulf Islands are among the region's most sensitive landscapes. Characterized by shallow, fast-drying soils, herbaceous ecosystems are found on bedrock outcroppings, hilltops, dunes, and large openings within forested areas. They support low-growing vegetation, such as grasses, wildflowers, mosses and ancient lichens. Only a few trees and shrubs can survive on these sites.

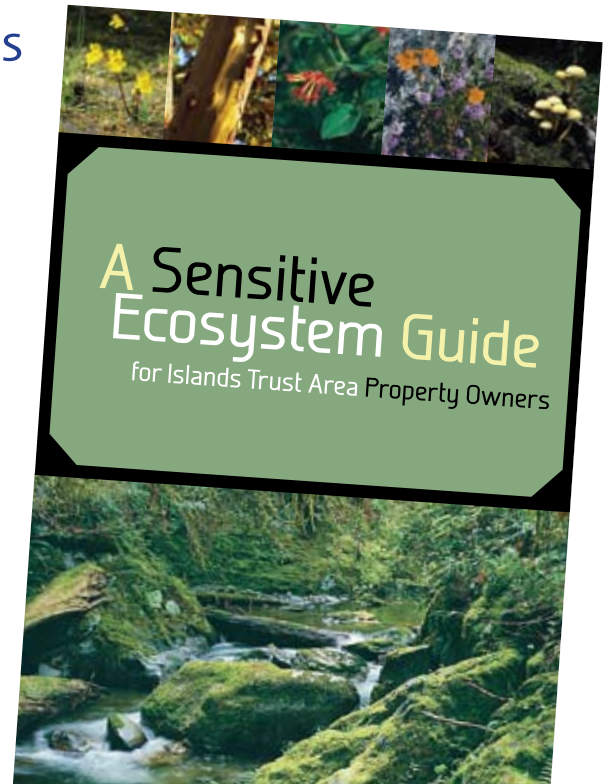
Why are Herbaceous Ecosystems important?

Due to their occurrence on highly exposed areas, herbaceous ecosystems provide extremely specialized micro-habitats for many species of rare butterflies, wildflowers and lichens. The lifecycles of certain rare species depend entirely on the specific conditions found within extremely small areas of herbaceous ecosystems.

How can we protect Herbaceous Ecosystems?

Because the plants found in herbaceous ecosystem are dependent on thin beds of soil to survive, this ecosystem is especially vulnerable to disturbance. Once plants are removed, the thin soil cover is stripped by rain and wind making it extremely hard for plants to re-establish in following years on the exposed bed-rock. To ensure colourful displays of wildflowers return year after year, landowners lucky enough to enjoy herbaceous ecosystems on their properties can take the following steps to protect them:

- Limit access and avoid any type of development to prevent soil and vegetation damage
- Create a vegetation buffer using native species to slow invasion by non-native species
- Actively control invasive species, such as broom, to reduce competition with rare native species
- Prevent disturbance to nesting or breeding areas by humans, livestock or pets, specially between March and August
- Allow natural seasonal moisture variations to continue by restricting human inputs such as septic discharge and garden watering



Photos
by Emily
Gonzales.



To protect an herbaceous ecosystem on your property, you can go one step further by permanently protecting the natural feature with a conservation covenant.

Sensitive Ecosystems in the Gulf Islands

Sensitive ecosystems in the Gulf Islands act as strongholds for rare species, but are especially vulnerable to human activities. As property owners, we play an important role in the stewardship of these unique areas. With the generous support of Vancity, the Islands Trust Fund produced a new and attractive resource for landowners, *A Sensitive Ecosystem Guide for Islands Trust Area Property Owners*. The booklet will help you identify herbaceous and other sensitive ecosystems on your property, and provide you with helpful tips on how to protect these pockets of refuge for rare species. For more information on the sensitive ecosystems of the Gulf Islands including updated ecosystem maps, visit us online at <http://www.islandstrust.bc.ca/lup/map/sem/default.cfm>. To request a copy of the Sensitive Ecosystem Guide, contact us by e-mail at itfmail@islandstrust.bc.ca or by phone at 250.405.5186.

Live Auction Raises Thousands for Island Conservancies

Author and comedian Arthur Black kicked off a live auction benefiting the Opportunity Fund by doubling the value of a \$100 bill. With a simple autograph and some smooth talking, the Salt Spring Islander and celebrity auctioneer successfully sold the first item of the night for \$200. All told, the night concluded with \$6,400 raised for natural area conservation in the Howe Sound and Gulf Islands.

The benefit auction was part of a December 9th celebration of the Islands Trust's 35th anniversary on Salt Spring Island. With auction items donated by residents and businesses throughout the islands, the chatter was fierce and the bids were frequent, evidence not only of the generous nature of the audience, but also of the quality of the items up for bid. The Islands Trust Fund thanks all those who generously donated items to raise money for the Opportunity Fund.

- Chocolate Christmas Tree from Cocoa West Chocolatier, Nerys Poole of Bowen Island
- Spalted Wooden Bow, Tom Knott of Hornby Island
- Signed copy of "A Thousand Dreams: Vancouver's Downtown Eastside and the Fight for its Future, Neil Boyd of Bowen Island
- "Lakeside" Painting, Dawn Stofer of Denman Island
- Guided Gabriola Kayak and Camping Trip, Jim's Kayaking of Gabriola Island
- Pottery Goblets, Freya Fullner of Thetis Island
- Handcrafted Box with Assorted Coffees, Pot of Gold Roasting Co. of Thetis Island
- Ceramic Platter, Bev Severn of Denman Island
- "Off the Grid & Off the Wall" Tour of Lasqueti Island, Jen Gobby of Lasqueti Island
- "Silver Beach" Framed Photo, David Borrowman of Salt Spring Island
- Hand Turned Maple Burl Bowl, Stan McRae of Gabriola Island
- Campbell Farm Wool Blanket, Janet Land of Saturna Island
- "Conserve Water" Painting by Dawn Stofer
- "Starfoot" Painting by Darlene Olesko
- "One for All, All for One" Painting by Debbie Bowles
- Circular Platter, Tom Dennis of Denman Island



Arthur Black taking bids during the live auction benefiting the Opportunity Fund. Photo by David Borrowman

- Haida Manga Book "Red" by Michael Nicoll Yahgulanaas, Phoenix on Bowen Island
- "Patterns No. 1" Mixed Media Painting by Maxine McRae
- Tofino Condo for two nights, Elizabeth Porter of Salt Spring Island
- "Cinnamon Spice" Driftwood Handle Basket, Donna Cochran of Salt Spring Island
- Salt Spring Island Day Cruise aboard "Soul Thyme", Keystone Wildlife Research
- Terra Cotta Dog Sculpture, Charles Breth of Salt Spring Island
- Oceanview cottage for two nights, Mayne Island Resort
- "Sundown: Tumbo Island" Painting, Brian Mitchell of Galiano Island

100% of the proceeds of the auction were donated to the Islands Trust Fund's Opportunity Fund. The Opportunity Fund supports local conservancies working on urgent and regionally important conservation projects. The funds raised will go toward the hard-to-fundraise costs associated with land protection, or be used to leverage increased donations to land acquisition projects in the Islands Trust Area. To date, the Opportunity Fund has helped protect more than 170 hectares of ecologically significant land in the islands.



Photo by Bruce Whittington.

You can still contribute!

Please donate to the Islands Trust Fund today.

100% of your tax-deductible gift will go to the Opportunity Fund, supporting conservation projects in the Gulf Islands.

Donate online at www.islandstrustfund.bc.ca/donationform.cfm

or by mail at

200-1627 Fort Street, Victoria, BC V8R 1H8

Saving Property Tax on Denman and Hornby

The Islands Trust Fund's flagship program has landed on the northern islands! 2010 marks the first year landowners on Denman and Hornby Islands can apply to the Natural Area Protection Tax Exemption Program (NAPTEP) to reduce their annual property taxes and permanently protect natural areas.

Since 2005, the Islands Trust Fund has worked with southern Gulf Islanders to protect more than 50 hectares of fragile ecosystems through the program. Witnessing that success, the Comox Valley Regional District Board and Trust Council agreed to include the Denman and Hornby Island Local Trust Areas in the innovative conservation program.

NAPTEP is the only program in British Columbia to offer property tax exemptions as an incentive for conservation. By registering a conservation covenant on their property through the program, landowners throughout the Gulf Islands receive an annual 65% property tax reduction on portions of their land protected by the covenant. Some NAPTEP participants report saving more than \$3,000 annually with the program.

A conservation covenant is a voluntary promise to protect natural features from development forever. A covenant is registered on the land title, ensuring future owners of the land are bound by the covenant as well. The Islands Trust Fund monitors the covenant area annually to ensure the natural features protected by the covenant remain healthy forever.

To learn more about the program, visit us online at www.islandstrustfund.bc.ca. If you're a landowner on Denman or Hornby interested in protecting natural areas on your property, we'd love to hear from you.

NAPTEP is currently available in the following Local Trust Area (including associated islands)

Denman	Mayne
Executive Islands	North Pender
Gabriola	Salt Spring
Galiano	Saturna
Gambier	South Pender
Hornby	Thetis

To learn more about how a conservation covenant or NAPTEP could help you protect your land, contact the Islands Trust Fund

**Email: itfmail@islandstrustfund.bc.ca
Phone: 250.405.5186
Toll Free (Enquiry BC): 1.800.663.7867**

The Natural Area Protection Tax Exemption Program

NAPTEP

Protect your land

PROTECT YOUR LAND

An incentive program to reduce property taxes

Conservation Covenants

Islands Trust Fund
creating a legacy of special places

Gabriola and Galiano Island Landowners Protect Vital Wildlife Habitat

Many of us make personal commitments each day to help the plants and animals around us. We plant native species in our gardens, avoid using chemicals on our lawn, or leave the dead tree standing in our forest for the resident owl to nest in. We quietly uphold these and other promises in an effort to make a difference in our little piece of the world.

There are others who go beyond personal commitments. These are the people who publicly promise to maintain natural habitat. They take legal steps to ensure that after they're gone, someone will continue to treat the land with the same respect and care. They create natural legacies for future generations — with conservation covenants.

We are excited to announce that this group of legacy-makers continues to grow. Since our last newsletter, two more island couples joined our covenant program to permanently protect the natural areas on their properties. They now have peace of mind knowing the Islands Trust Fund will forever watch over the natural features on their properties and they receive a permanent 65% break on their property taxes because their covenants were registered through NAPTEP — the Islands Trust Fund's conservation tax-incentive program.

Stanley and Maxine McRae became the first landowners on Gabriola Island to register a conservation covenant through NAPTEP since the program arrived on the island in 2009. The McRaes' covenant protects a Douglas-fir and cedar forest with luscious fern undergrowth and a colourful Garry oak meadow with hairy manzanita and rare wildflowers. Stanley and Maxine's drive to protect their land stems from a deep respect and love for

the creatures they share their land with. "It's

important that this wildlife continues to have a sanctuary, a safe place to retreat to as our population grows and development continues," said Stanley.

Dr. David and June Collins donated the Westbourne NAPTEP covenant on Galiano Island. Placing the covenant on a maturing forest overlooking Montague Harbour, the Collins forever protected prime habitat for the endangered Red-legged frog and a variety of sensitive plant communities. "The 65% exemption on our property taxes was what originally enticed us to apply to the program," said David, standing among the trees of the Collins' heritage orchard. "But the unexpected bonus was learning how we could serve as stewards of our land. We now leave decaying trees and branches to make homes for the animals that share this land with us. Resisting the urge to 'tidy up' allows us to enjoy the diversity of life that appears at our doorstep."

In the Gulf Islands, natural area conservation goals can't be met without landowners like the McRaes and Collins'. With a relatively small proportion of the land owned by the Crown, the future ecological health of the Gulf Islands relies primarily on private landowners. We are grateful to all of you who take steps everyday to live in harmony with our natural environment, and especially grateful to the McRaes, Collins' and the other fifty-seven covenant donors working with the Islands Trust Fund, who demonstrate that the actions of individuals can truly make a difference for the future.

It's inspiring when ordinary people make an extraordinary gift to the future.



Morrison Marsh Nature Reserve: a Subdivision with a Difference

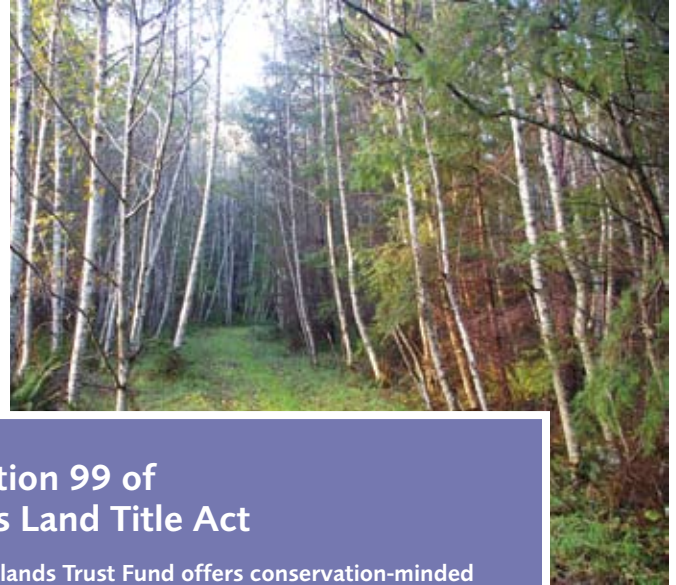
As a Great Blue Heron wades delicately through the reeds, it becomes clear why Morrison Marsh Nature Reserve on Denman Island is a birder's paradise. Home to more than 80 bird species, the site serves as a key waterfowl over-wintering and breeding area.

The lush, forested 50-hectare (125 acre) property encompasses the headwaters and southern portion of Denman Island's largest marsh. Protected permanently by the Islands Trust Fund, Morrison Marsh Nature Reserve is a crucial component of a network of natural land on southern Denman Island, linking Boyle Point Provincial Park and adjacent forest on Crown land.

Morrison Marsh Nature Reserve was donated using Section 99 of the Land Title Act of British Columbia. Section 99 allowed the original landowner to subdivide without navigating the usual approval process because the severed lot was donated to the Islands Trust Fund for conservation purposes. Despite the donor's anonymity, their intentions were conservation-minded from the beginning. The donor purchased the original lot in 2000 with the intent to conserve the section around the marsh. "[This donor] is someone who's looking many generations ahead," said Patti Willis, a director with the Denman Conservancy Association.

With that vision, generations of islanders will continue to walk the property's network of trails while appreciating the feeling of peace inspired by the still waters of the marsh. This past year, nature enthusiasts enjoyed the property with greater ease and drier feet, as the Denman Conservancy Association worked to revitalize the trail system, constructing detours around sensitive habitat and placing stepping stones over seasonally wet areas.

Those interested in learning more about Morrison Marsh Nature Reserve or its management can view the management plan online at <http://www.islandstrustfund.bc.ca/pdf/itfmgmtplanmarsh.pdf>



Morrison Marsh Nature Reserve.

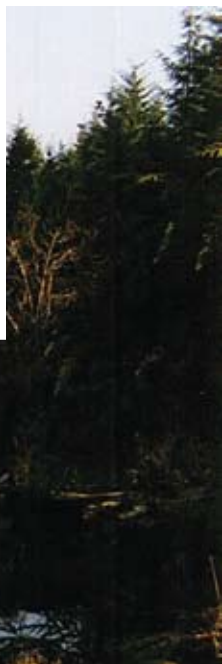
Section 99 of BC's Land Title Act

The Islands Trust Fund offers conservation-minded landowners, like the donor of Morrison Marsh Nature Reserve, an innovative tool for protecting land easily and inexpensively. Using Section 99 of the *Land Title Act of British Columbia*, a landowner can subdivide a property while bypassing the usual subdivision approval process by transferring the severed portion of the property to the Islands Trust Fund for conservation purposes. To be approved for the subdivision, a landowner needs only a reference plan or metes and bounds description, rather than a full survey. The transferred property would also need to contain significant natural values. Donors can save time, money and effort and will have the peace of mind that comes from knowing that their special sanctuary will be protected and cared for in perpetuity by one of British Columbia's leading land trusts.

Subdividing a large property to create a nature reserve is a cost effective way for landowners to reduce their annual property taxes without sacrificing the privacy afforded by their natural surroundings. In addition, donors can reduce their income tax if they qualify for the federal Ecological Gifts Program.

For more information on this and other ways to donate land, visit us at <http://www.islandstrustfund.bc.ca/donations.cfm>

Morrison Marsh Nature Reserve. Photo by Patti Willis.



Partner Spotlight

Conservation success in the Islands Trust Area would not be possible without dedicated and committed volunteers. Many local island conservancies and community groups devote countless field-hours protecting natural places. Working together, we can continue to care for the islands in the Strait of Georgia and Howe Sound.

Pender Islands Conservancy Association (PICA)

Protecting an iconic island landmark requires a dedicated champion and the protection of Medicine Beach on North Pender Island is no exception. In 1995, the Pender Islands Conservancy Association (PICA) rallied the community to help purchase the Medicine Beach property, including its marsh and upland forest. The Islands Trust Fund accepted title to the property, and PICA, as property manager, has cared for Medicine Beach ever since. PICA's devotion to the nature sanctuary serves as a first-rate example of land stewardship.

This spring, PICA included the Medicine Beach Nature Sanctuary in its Earth Day North and South Pender beach clean-up activities, which saw volunteers filling three construction

dumpsters with 3000 pounds of garbage (they even threw in a sink ... not the kitchen, but a bathroom sink!). The Trust Fund Board is grateful to PICA, its members and all the Earth Day partners who gave Medicine Beach a clean start to the year. An on-going "Adopt-A-Beach" program now has volunteers lined up to scour most of the Islands' beaches on a monthly basis.

Leading by example is the primary way PICA furthers the stewardship of the Penders' natural areas. They also equip island residents to do the same, by hosting active community education campaigns. Regular speaker events, Bird House Building Workshops for Young Naturalists, Project Eagle Watch, and door-to-door landowner contact programs are just some of the ways PICA ensures its community gets the best conservation knowledge available. PICA has helped eleven property owners protect land permanently with conservation covenants, and acts as a major promoter of the Islands Trust Fund's NAPTEP program.

We are thankful for the endless enthusiasm shown by PICA towards land conservation in our region. The sum of their hard work and the efforts of all our local island conservancy partners keeps the Islands Trust Area a sanctuary of amazing beauty and biodiversity.

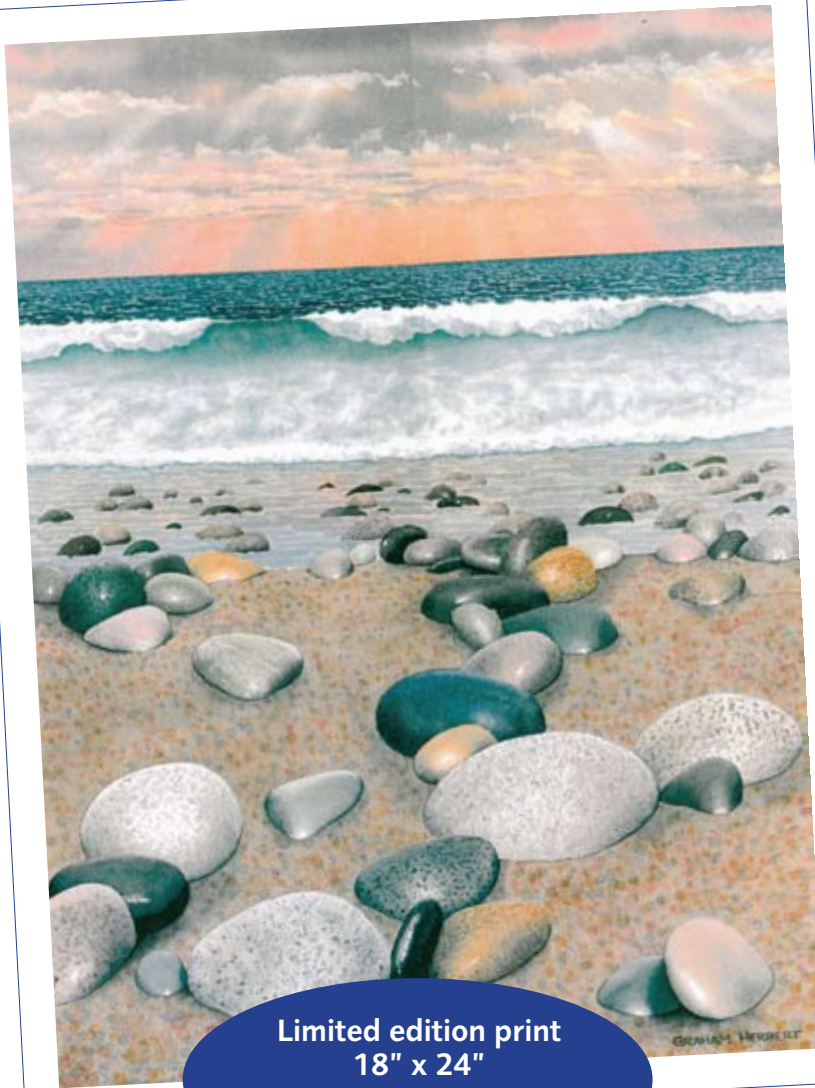


PICA's Earth Day Beach Cleanup.
Photos by Jacquie MacDonald.

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This spring, PICA included the Medicine Beach Nature Sanctuary in its Earth Day North and South Pender beach clean-up activities.
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Sunrise over Medicine Beach Nature Sanctuary. Photo by Ewa Jarosinska.



Limited edition print
18" x 24"

\$125

Bring West Coast beauty into your home ...

Artist Graham Herbert captures the moods and shifting scenes on the West Coast from his sky lit studio nestled in the trees on Hornby Island. His paintings are charged with the energy which emanates from the transition between earth and sky and water. Graham's paintings have been featured on magazine and book covers and the subject of television and magazine articles.

Purchase a limited edition print of Graham Herbert's "Radiance" and support the conservation of island landscapes — the subject of Graham's inspiration.

100% of all proceeds go to the Opportunity Fund to benefit local conservation projects in the Gulf Islands and Howe Sound.

To purchase your limited edition of "Radiance", contact us by phone at 250.405.5186 or e-mail at itfmail@islandstrust.bc.ca

ISLANDS TRUST FUND

Board Members Louise Bell, Denman Island; Michael Dunn, Mayne Island; Robert Grant, Denman Island; Nerys Poole, Bowen Island; Christine Torgimson, Salt Spring Island

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