

THE UNDERSTORY

SLT LAND STEWARD NEWSLETTER

MAY 2012

THE SKAGIT LAND TRUST WORK PARTY PICTURE AND HISTORY WEBSITE

BY PETE HAASE

Since October, 2006, there have been more than 85 work parties on 20 different Land Trust properties or easements! I know this because I have taken digital pictures at most of them and made little websites for all of them.

Wow, 15 events a year - what a huge amount of work has been accomplished! The pictures, over time, capture progress and results so well. That is a major reason I do this – the history and progress is so inspirational and important to preserve.

The first work party I ever attended was before 2006; a spring tree planting event at what is now Green Road Marsh. We put in some potted conifers and a lot of willow stakes. It is hard to remember where I planted because it is so grown up there now. Brenda Cunningham was giving the instructions and there was a call for people who had kayaks or rafts to come out later and get in the water to check things out. I did not bring my camera then, nor did I get notice of the water adventure, so those are lost unless someone else has them hidden away somewhere!

Some time later I suggested to Molly Doran that I would like to take pictures and make websites so people could see their efforts. If we had then imagined 85 different little websites we probably would have organized things a lot differently, but I don't think anybody then even imagined 85 work parties! Things were sort of a step-and-a-hop at a time. This was when the very first Americorp, Brian Bluhm, was on board and beginning to make work parties and volunteer recruitment a more organized activity. But boy, have things worked out nicely.

Lots of other folks have also taken many of the pictures; they send me their shots and I incorporate them and

hopefully give them credit. All of them are far better photographers than I. All I do is point and click and hope! But, digital photography being what it is, I get a few good ones and most of what happens at a work party gets captured and displayed. I enjoy selecting the pictures to take and show and then providing some verbal comments on the websites. I hope you folks enjoy seeing yourselves and your work. So far nobody has asked me to remove a picture!

Twice I was able to have young visiting granddaughters come for work parties and I was able to include pictures of them. Those were high-light experiences. Now when they come to visit we sometimes open those websites up and enjoy seeing how much has changed!

We're closing in on 100 events and I still have life in the camera batteries. We'll have a heck of a celebration! I wonder which property it will be, and when.



*One of Pete's grand-daughters planting a tree at Hurn.
Caring about our Earth must run in the family!*

THE GOOD, THE BAD, AND THE BEAUTIFUL

Northwest Botany
by Regina Wandler

Indian-Plum *Oemleria cerasifomis*

One of the first plants to flower in the spring, Indian-Plum is a pale green leafed shrub 1.5-5 meters tall, with purplish-brown bark. The greenish-white flowers appear very early, often before the leaves, and form clusters of hanging flowers.



You can identify it by its unusual smell - something reminiscent of cat urine. Birds love the fruits, and people can eat them as well, but be aware of the large pits! Also called osoberry, the fruits were eaten in small quantities fresh, dried or cooked by first nation peoples. Twigs were chewed, or sometimes burned and mixed with fish oil, and applied to sore places.

St. John's-Wort *Hypericum perforatum*

St. John's-Wort is native to Eurasia and northern Africa. It was introduced due to its medicinal value for alleviating nervous disorders and as an application to wounds with exposed nerves. It spreads easily in North America, and is toxic to humans and livestock. Sensitive individuals become susceptible to skin burns and dermatitis, especially with exposure to sunlight. The flowers are yellow and starlike with tiny black spots on the margins, producing capsules holding tiny dark seeds. A single plant can produce up to 10,000 seeds/year.



Round-Leaved Sundew *Drosera rotundifolia*

This strange but beautiful plant is one of our few native carnivorous plants. Most people don't see it unless they already know to look for it, in low to medium elevation sphagnum bogs, fens and wet meadows. Great Sundew is very similar and also found here, though it is less common. The leaves are sticky, glandular and spreading, fringed with long hairs which exude drops of sticky fluid. There are small white flowers which only fully open in direct sunlight. The leaves were also used for removing corns, warts, and bunyons in local first nations, and in Europe. In Europe, the sap was also used in cheesemaking.

**Much of this information came from Pojar and Mackinnon's Plants of the Pacific Northwest. Check it out for more info!*

RIBBIT, RIBBIT!

Skagit Land Trust volunteers have been gathering a great deal of data over the last year. We've had vegetation monitoring, and talked about photopoints and invasives monitoring. In March and April, a group of dedicated volunteers contributed their time to yet another valuable baseline project by going out on Skagit Land Trust properties and surveying for the Oregon Spotted Frog!

Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife and the Forest Service have been surveying Skagit and Whatcom counties for the OSF over the last few years. Don Gay, a former member of our Stewardship Committee and wildlife biologist, had helped lead this effort, and encouraged us to get involved. At first, they were trying to conclusively prove that the OSF was no longer present this far north, in order to attempt a reintroduction. However, last year, the OSF was discovered in Whatcom County, and this year, it was located in Skagit County, in the Samish watershed! While it was not present on land trust properties, we now have valuable data about the amphibians present on our lands - and these folks now have a keen eye for frog and salamander egg masses.

Everyone had great fun tromping about in the shallows with waders, polarized sunglasses and walking sticks! Thanks to Heidi Nichols, Brenda Cunningham, Joe George, Martha Bray, John Day, Don Gay, Crystal Bogue, Lin Skavdahl, Jim Johnson, Jim Owens, Hal Lee and Lloyd Brown for joining in the fun!



THANK YOU!

To everyone who came out and counted heron nests at the Squires heronry, pulled blackberry and dug tree protectors out at Barney Lake, worked on trail maintenance at Barr Creek and Guemes Mountain, worked the Auction, made it out to Kosbab to gather tree protectors, and pulled scotch broom or butterfly bush at Hurn!

HEY STEWARDS!

MANY ENVIRONMENTALISTS ARE ALSO WRITERS. THEY HAVE MANY *LITTER RARELY* QUALITIES! PLEASE SEND YOUR LAND TRUST PROPERTY INSPIRED PHOTOS, POEMS, ILLUSTRATIONS, RIDDLES OR WHAT HAVE YOU TO REGINA FOR INCLUSION IN THE NEXT ISSUE OF THE UNDERSTORY!

**SOME MORE OF PETE'S PHOTOS
FROM WORKPARTIES PAST...**



ABOVE: Volunteers installing the gate at Minkler Lake
LOWER LEFT: Molly and Mehari carting trees around
LOWER RIGHT: Planting in the snow at Tope Ryan



**SKAGIT CONSERVATION AREAS
AND THEIR
LAND STEWARDS**

- Barney Lake - Tim Manns & Brenda Cunningham
- Barr Creek - Russ Dalton
- Butler Creek - Jim Owens
- Cumberland Creek - Jim Johnson
- Day Creek (Berquist & Forest) - Stan Zyskowski
- Day Creek Kosbab - Doc Risedorf
- Day Creek Slough - Hal Lee
- Grandy Creek - John Freeman
- Green Road Marsh - Heidi Nichols
- Guemes Mountain - Ed & Carolyn Gastellum, Marianne Kooiman & Joost Businger
- Hurn Field - Steffany Raynes & Lin Skavdahl
- Lyman Slough - Dick Raisler
- Marchs Point - LaVerne & Jim Scheltens
- Minkler Lake - Hal Lee
- Mud Lake - Lloyd Brown
- Presentin Ranch - Bill & Sally Pfeifer
- Samish - Ochs - Pete & Dorothy Haase
- Samish River - OPEN!
- Samish - Squires CE - Jack & Anne Middleton
- Tope Ryan - John Day

SPRING AND SUMMER 2012 EVENTS

Hurn Field Bird Walk
Walk with Tim Manns, Birder
May 11th, 8:30 - 11:00

**Cumberland Creek - A Day of Trails
and Invasives Removal**
May 12th, 9:30 - 1:30

Guemes Thistle Battle
May 31st, 10:00 - 2:30

GPS Training and Potluck
June 15th, 2:30 - 5:30

Barr Creek Trail Brushout
June 21st, 10:00 - 12:30

Vegetation Monitoring with Bashira
June 14th- July 6th
Scheduling emails galore to come!

The Geology of Guemes Mountain
Hike with Scott Magorian, Geologist
July 15th, 9:30 - 1:30

Check our website for more information!



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Mission Statement

Skagit Land Trust conserves wildlife habitat, wetlands, agricultural and forest lands, scenic open space and shorelines for the benefit of our community and as a legacy for future generations.

NOTES FROM MICHAEL KIRSHENBAUM

If you're like me, when you walk through a land trust conservation area, you start obsessing about all of the work that needs to be done and the uncompleted projects. While that's probably a productive mindset for all of us stewardship folks to have, I think we've also got to take a step back every now and then and appreciate all we've accomplished over the past few years. We're reviewing the management plans for some of the trust's older properties right now, and I'm amazed by how many of the goals have been accomplished – usually with the hard work of volunteers, stewards and partners. Here's just a short list of some of the bigger changes (and don't feel bad if your property isn't on here – there's not enough space to list everything!):

- **Cumberland Creek** An interpretive trail system has been built and is being well-used by the public.
- **Day Creek Kosbab** 110-acres of potato fields have been transformed into a thriving riparian forest, with help from the Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP), the Wetland Reserve Program and the Skagit River System Cooperative.
- **Minkler Lake** Volunteers have planted hundreds of trees in the upper meadow and several acres of former pasture land are now diverse young woodland.

• **Butler Creek** A resilient (is there any other kind?) blackberry infestation that refused to yield has finally succumbed to volunteer grubbing and new trees.

• **Lyman Slough** Spruce and other species are starting to win the war, with much volunteer weed-whacking, against blackberry, bringing diversity to this riparian area.

• **Hurn Field** From a vast CREP planting along House Slough to the interpretive elk-viewing pullout, Hurn Field has ticked off nearly every one of the items on its original management plan.

• **Tope Ryan** A healthy forest now lines the Samish and two tributaries thanks to the CREP program and many hours of volunteer help – including from the resident beavers - all of which transformed a pasture to thriving wetland and riparian habitats.

• **Guemes Mountain** Hundreds of volunteers created a much-used and loved trail to the top of this gem in Puget Sound.

• **Barr Creek** Volunteers built a trail to a waterfall and a connection to the historic Old Sauk Mtn. Trail.

So next time you visit the property you steward, don't dwell too long on what we still need to do - be sure to think about all that's been accomplished and how SLT lands are truly being saved and restored for future generations.