

Hérons Return to Nest In Record Numbers!!!!

In 1994 Bud and Vera Kinney donated 3.5 acres of their land on March's Point to Skagit Land Trust. Great Blue Herons have been nesting on the forested property since the 1970s and the Kinneys wanted to see the area protected. At the time of the donation there were at least 100 heron nests in the area. In December 2003, 575 nests were counted at the site!

Although the number of heron nests at this site has increased dramatically in the past few years, the heron population of the area has not. Skagit Land Trust Executive Director Molly Doran says, "There is a growing concern that small heronries throughout Puget Sound are being abandoned because of encroaching development and the herons are congregating in fewer locations, making protection of these nesting locations all the more critical." Loss of foraging habitat elsewhere may also be attracting the birds to March's Point. March's Point Heronry is located between three major marine bays (Fidalgo,

Padilla and Similk) and the farm fields of the lower Samish and Skagit deltas, providing the herons with areas to hunt for fish, frogs and small mammals. The proximity of so much rich foraging habitat makes it ideal for finding enough food to satisfy hungry, young chicks.

Skagit Land Trust conducts surveys of the nests every year after the leaves fall from the trees and before the herons return in the early spring. Volunteers systematically count the nests, record information about the nest trees and mark the trees with tags so their use can be tracked year after year.



Photo by Jerry Eisner

On December 13, 2003, we had an exceptional group of volunteers helping us count nests. Skagit Land Trust members and staff were joined by many members of the greater community, including employees and family of T Bailey, members of Friends of Skagit County, People for Puget Sound, The Port of Anacortes and Beach Watchers from Camano Island. Four teams were formed, each with a scribe and many pairs of eyes to search for nests. At the end of the day 575 nests were counted in 272 trees. This count makes March's Point the largest known Great Blue Heron colony in Puget Sound and likely the largest on the west coast of North America.



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Skagit Update

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Editor: Molly Doran

Drawings by Brenda Cunningham

Letter from the Executive Director

Private landowners are making a tremendous difference in what the future of this region is going to look like. In this newsletter you will read about the Conservation Easement John and Kristen Boyes placed on their Clear Lake property. The Boyes could have subdivided their property to the maximum allowable home sites or harvested the forest for income. Instead they decided to protect the land they love for the community and for future generations.

Conservation Easements are a relatively new conservation tool, becoming prevalent in the 1980's. Yet in a short time their impact has been enormous. By enabling landowners to maintain ownership while protecting the natural character of the land forever, Conservation Easements have protected almost 3 million acres nationwide. Most Conservation Easements are voluntary donations and benefit the public by protecting valuable land, thus the value a landowner gives may also be considered a charitable gift. This market-based approach to conservation works so well it is being used in other countries. Currently Congress is reviewing increased tax incentives for conservation easements to help stem the loss of farmland, forestland and valuable habitat nationwide. However due to their increased use and some possibility of misuse, they are taking care to ensure easements are properly structured to reflect the intent of the law and meet specific conservation purposes.

Here in Skagit County, Conservation Easements have helped knit together habitat that would otherwise be fragmented by development and are helping to safeguard fragile ecosystems and precious open space. In particular, there are few other conservation methods available to protect valuable county landscapes such as lowland forests and farmlands. If we want to retain our high quality of life and resist succumbing to the sprawl that robs an area of its natural beauty, scenic vistas and wildlife corridors, we need methods that support individual acts of conservation.

I thank all our county residents who have donated conservation easements on their property. Without them, we'd be leaving a much poorer Skagit to future generations.

Molly Doran
Executive Director



NEW CONSERVATION EASEMENT

NEW CONSERVATION EASEMENT PROTECTS CLEAR LAKE FARM

Dr. John Boyes has owned a small farm just north of Clear Lake since 1975. It is pretty as a picture – a classic, old-fashioned, twenty-four acre farm – complete with old apple trees and a root cellar made of stone. The pastures are lined with sturdy wooden fences, and years ago John had a beautiful big round barn built from recycled warehouse beams; this was to stable and train the thoroughbred horses that he and his wife Kristen raised. The farm is nestled on the south side of a forested hill graced by large old cedars and Douglas fir.

The Boyes are now ready to move on, but before they sell the farm they want to make sure it won't change too much. The current zoning allows for up to five houses on the land – and the 8 acres of forest is completely harvestable under current regulations. If a new buyer were to maximize his or her economic value, the farm and the forest would disappear.



John and Kristen Boyes

The Conservation Easement the Boyes donated to the Trust prevents any further subdivision or residential development beyond two single-family residences. It also ensures Best Management Practices will be employed on the farm, limits

the amount of impervious surface that can be covered with farm structures, and prohibits cutting of the forested hillside outside of a designated one-acre homesite.

This is likely to substantially reduce the potential sale price of the land, but the Boyes are willing to give this up in favor of conservation, and the likelihood of qualifying for a charitable donation.

Kristen says that people in Clear Lake have implored her to save the valuable trees on the farm's hillside, and on the adjacent acreage the Boyes also own. This stand of mature low elevation forest serves as a scenic backdrop to the town and, it is a disappearing habitat type that is vital for species dependent on big trees adjacent to wetlands and open areas. These include Vaux Swift, Pileated Woodpecker, several species of bats and native amphibians. These signature landscapes of forest-clad hills rising from the river floodplain are rapidly giving way to residential development and clear-cutting in the Skagit Valley.

The Boyes hope to continue their commitment to conservation by working with the Trust to protect additional forest on their adjacent parcels in the future. Private land conservation through donation of Conservation Easements is one of the few tools currently available to help protect these important low elevation forests. We commend the foresight and commitment to conservation shown by John and Kristen Boyes.



Heronry Stewards – Jim and Levy Sheltens

Levy Scheltens is the Volunteer Land Steward for the March's Point Heronry. Her husband Jim volunteers as her able-bodied assistant. However, the truth be known, they work as a team.

Daily, Jim drops Levy off for work at the Shell Puget Sound Refinery on March's Point and then drives past the heronry to check it out on his way to work at PACCAR Technical Center. He says, "The Great Blue Heron is such a large, striking, prehistoric-looking bird. It is amazing to see large numbers of herons leave the heronry in the morning and spread out across the tide flats, or return in the evening. Having so many concentrated in such a small area is a wonderful highlight of our area that we should preserve."

The Sheltens moved to Anacortes 20 years ago because of the abundance of parks, shoreline, and wildlife. Since then, they have had a growing concern about how much land is being lost to development each year. They are grateful to Bud and Vera Kinney for donating their 3.5 acres of the heronry to the Trust for preservation in perpetuity and are grateful to the Trust for defending it from outside encroachment. Jim says, "Most conservation efforts seem to be adversarial, but the Land Trust is able to do effective environmental work in a co-operative way. The work the Trust does is also lasting. What the Trust preserves today is likely to stay preserved."

The Scheltens are delighted they are a part of preserving this outstanding heron habitat. We are delighted they have chosen to volunteer their time and talent to protect the March's Point Heronry.



Levy Sheltens
at Heron Count



WELCOME SPRING BY PROTECTING LOCAL LANDS. JOIN SKAGIT LAND TRUST FOR A WILDLIFE BENEFIT CRUISE FROM LA CONNER April 3, 9:30am -1:30pm

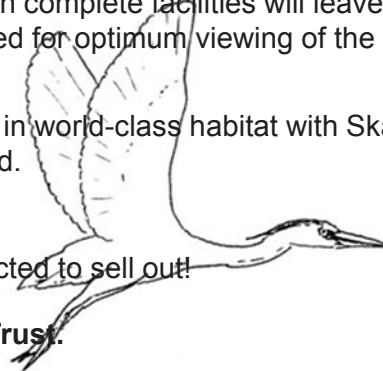
Skagit Land Trust is sponsoring a half-day cruise on the Viking Star with Tim Manns and Brenda Cunningham and other naturalists. This comfortable boat with complete facilities will leave La Conner and explore the surrounding bays and sloughs. The cruise is timed for optimum viewing of the arrival of vast numbers of Great Blue Herons to the March's Point Heronry.

Come witness natural history in the making and view wildlife in world-class habitat with Skagit County experts. Invite your friends as part of a Tulip Festival weekend.

Price: \$50 per person. Reservations are required.

Call Diane at 360-428-7878. Call early as this cruise is expected to sell out!

Proceeds from the cruise directly benefit Skagit Land Trust.



Skagit Land Trust 12th Annual Meeting

The annual meeting of Skagit Land Trust
will be held at
Shelter Bay Club House, LaConner
March 19th, 2004 / 6 –9PM

6-7pm Refreshments, Displays, Silent Auction (Items include: sea kayaking trip & lessons, picnic, hand made wood carving, etc.)

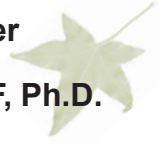
7-9pm Business Meeting and Guest Speaker
Invitations, with directions, will be mailed
in early March.

If a Trust member would like to be considered for election to the Skagit Land Trust Board of Directors, or would like to nominate another member, he or she should submit a petition, endorsed by at least 5 other members, to the nomination committee by February 18, 2004. Petitions should be mailed to the nomination chair, John Osborn,
PO Box 1017, Mount Vernon, WA 98273.

All nominees must be members.

Guest Speaker

EUGENE KOZLOFF, Ph.D.



Eugene Kozloff, Ph.D., is a professor of Zoology at the University of Washington and one of the Northwest's most knowledgeable and beloved naturalists. He is the author of many field guides including Seashore Life of the Northern Pacific Coast and Plants and Animals of the Pacific Northwest. His books are considered the Northwest field guides of choice for common folk and scholars alike due to their interesting nature, beautiful photos and inclusion of the common to the obscure. Eugene loves to share his intimate knowledge of the biological world through teaching. As someone said, "Learning from Kozloff is pure bliss."

Eugene will be the guest presenter at our Annual Meeting on March 19th. He will give a slide presentation on *Symbiosis, The Interesting Relationship Between Organisms*. Bring your friends, family and your books for signing and listen to the master tell the story of the rich and incredible ways organisms live together in relationship.

Yes! I want to protect Skagit County's natural legacy!



Thank you for supporting
land conservation!

Donations to Skagit Land Trust
are tax deductible.

Please remit to:
Skagit Land Trust
PO Box 1017

Name _____ Business** _____ Address _____ _____ Phone _____ Enclosed is my check for \$ _____. Please charge \$ _____ monthly quarterly one time	<table border="1" style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <thead> <tr> <th colspan="2" style="text-align: left; padding: 5px;">Membership Categories</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td style="padding: 5px;"><input type="checkbox"/> Individual</td> <td style="padding: 5px;">\$25</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="padding: 5px;"><input type="checkbox"/> Family</td> <td style="padding: 5px;">\$35</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="padding: 5px;"><input type="checkbox"/> Supporter*</td> <td style="padding: 5px;">\$50</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="padding: 5px;"><input type="checkbox"/> Sponsor*</td> <td style="padding: 5px;">\$100</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="padding: 5px;"><input type="checkbox"/> Patron*</td> <td style="padding: 5px;">\$250</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="padding: 5px;"><input type="checkbox"/> Benefactor*</td> <td style="padding: 5px;">\$500</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="padding: 5px;"><input type="checkbox"/> Conservator*</td> <td style="padding: 5px;">\$1000</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="padding: 5px;"><input type="checkbox"/> Steward*</td> <td style="padding: 5px;">\$2500</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="padding: 5px;"><input type="checkbox"/> Major Donor*</td> <td style="padding: 5px;">\$5000</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Membership Categories		<input type="checkbox"/> Individual	\$25	<input type="checkbox"/> Family	\$35	<input type="checkbox"/> Supporter*	\$50	<input type="checkbox"/> Sponsor*	\$100	<input type="checkbox"/> Patron*	\$250	<input type="checkbox"/> Benefactor*	\$500	<input type="checkbox"/> Conservator*	\$1000	<input type="checkbox"/> Steward*	\$2500	<input type="checkbox"/> Major Donor*	\$5000
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Leaving a Legacy of Land Conservation

There are a number of ways that you can leave a legacy of land conservation.

* A memorial or honorarium is a thoughtful way of paying tribute to a loved one or associate while benefiting the land. If you would like to remember a special person or occasion, what better way to honor those who appreciate Skagit County than by helping to protect the natural diversity that makes it so unique. The honoree or their family will be notified of your gift and we will also send you an acknowledgment of the donation.

* Bequests - Skagit Land Trust has been remembered in wills through cash or property bequests. This is one of the simplest ways to make a future gift.

* There are many types of charitable gifts with tax advantages, such as charitable remainder trusts, that also help protect local lands. We encourage you to contact your professional tax advisor as to how best to structure a gift for your needs.

COOPERATIVE GRANT PROPOSAL RECOMMENDED FOR FUNDING

In July of 2003, Ducks Unlimited submitted a proposal to a federal grant program, funded by the North American Wetland Conservation Act (NAWCA), for \$1,000,000. The grant proposal was for Ducks Unlimited to work with its partners, including Skagit Land Trust, to continue protection and restoration of key wetlands in the Skagit and Samish watersheds. We are pleased to announce that in December, the NAWCA Council recommended funding this proposal. Included in the grant will be \$290,000 for Skagit Land Trust habitat protection projects.

THANKYOU

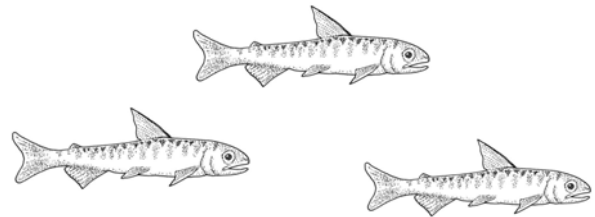
Thais Armstrong for the use of her splendid watercolor painting used on the Trust's holiday card.

Jerry Eisner for donating his beautiful bird photographs that the Trust uses on note cards and calendars.

Linda & John Hunt for donating office furniture and supplies.

John Osborn for his truck and strong back in moving all of the new furniture.

Herb Sargo for 2 folding signboards to help people find Trust events and signs for our office door and windows.



Mark Your Calendar

Save Land and Shop for Skagit Land Trust on February 27th

4% Friday at Skagit Valley Food Co-op

We are pleased to announce that the Skagit Valley Food Co-op has chosen Skagit Land Trust for their 4% Friday program. This program gives 4% of the Co-op sales on one Friday a month to a non-profit community organization.

**Please show your support
for the
Land Trust and shop**
at the SVFC on **February 27th** (you don't have to be a member to shop at the co-op).

Trust Builders

Major Donors

Bob & Pat Hegg Brown

Conservator

(\$1000-\$2,499)

Anonymous Donor
Anonymous Donor
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Shorebird Properties
The Language Exchange, Inc

Business Supporter

(\$50 - \$99)

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Meyer Sign & Advertising Co.
Skagit Valley Healing Arts

Additional Contributions

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Printwise
Skagit Valley Healing Arts

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Lands
Evergreen Islands
Skagit Audubon Society
Skagit Conservation District
Skagitians to Preserve
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The Burning Foundation
The Dudley Foundation
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Thanks to New and Renewing Members

July 1, 2003 - December 31, 2003

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Sue and George Mehler
Gene and Ginny Murphy
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(Renewed in celebration of
Martha Bray and John Day)

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In Memory of Mark
Burrington

Nadine Burrington

In Memory of
Lois Engelbright

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Tamara Stevens &
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Alfred & Laurie Strasser
Ned & Jeane Swanson
Cecil & June Thomas
Pamela & Curtis Vail
Keith & Jan Wiggers

In Memory of
Les Swalling

Brenda Cunningham &
Tim Manns

In Memory of
Marie Glick

Dr. Ann Spradlin



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www.skagitlandtrust.org

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Saving Land for Tomorrow

Upcoming Volunteer Events:

February 28 – Young’s Slough: Help us improve the conditions in our watershed by planting trees in a fallow field along the Skagit River. A great event for families. Great views of the Skagit.

March 20 – Butler Flats: Celebrate the beginning of spring by planting willow “whips” and other native plants that provide cover for ducks, amphibians and songbirds in a wetlands protected by Skagit Land Trust. Children are welcome.

May 1 – Day Creek: Join us for a “clean up party” and tour of a beautiful new Trust property. The day will include a hike out to the gravel bars on the Skagit River. Come help us give this habitat a fresh start.

June 19 – Chuckanut Walk/Tour: Join Skagit Land Trust for a walking tour of the Chuckanuts. We’ll explore the natural history and talk about this unique greenway between the Cascades and Puget Sound and why we need to protect it.

If you are interested in any of these events, please call the Trust’s Stewardship Director, Brenda Cunningham at (360) 428-7878 for details and to let her know you are coming. It is a great opportunity to get outside with a wonderful group of people, learn more about our region’s natural history, and see what types of properties the Trust protects.

Save the Date Details Inside

February
27th

4% Friday
Shop at the
Skagit Valley Food Co-op
for Skagit Land Trust!

March
19th

Skagit Land Trust
Annual Meeting 6-9pm
Shelter Bay, LaConner

April
3rd

Cruise the Viking Star
with wildlife experts.