

Saving the Skagit – Four More Properties Protected

Salmon and other wildlife will benefit for decades to come thanks to the Washington State Salmon Recovery Funding Board's (SRFB) recent grant allowing Skagit Land Trust and its partners to protect more properties on the Skagit River.

Two of the newly acquired parcels in the Middle Skagit River area will be owned and managed by Skagit Land Trust. They include a 42-acre parcel on Day Creek near Warfield Road. The second parcel adds a key five-acre piece to the 300-acre Cumberland Creek Conservation Area which lies across the river from Hamilton. The Nature Conservancy and Skagit Land Trust worked in partnership to secure a 92-acre parcel near Rockport and a property at Pressentin Park in Marblemount that is a ½ mile of Skagit River shoreline. The Nature Conservancy will manage the first property and Skagit County Parks the latter.

These projects took several years to come to fruition. "It was a long involved process and the landowners were incredibly understanding and patient," Skagit Land Trust's land specialist Jane Zillig remarked regarding the Day Creek purchase.



Day Creek and its sloughs are very important to salmon recovery, as they were once extremely productive habitat for Chinook, coho, chum and pink salmon as well as steelhead and bull trout. Large numbers of juvenile salmon have been observed in this reach and a variety of other wildlife species

also use the land, which includes braided channels and several wetlands.

Skagit Land Trust worked with The Nature Conservancy for almost three years to assist them in acquiring a 92-acre property adjacent to Barnaby Slough and the mouth of the tributary, Illabot Creek. Surrounded on three sides by property protected by Seattle City Light, Department of Fish



Board and staff of Skagit Land Trust were joined by representatives from the Skagit Fisheries Enhancement Group and the Skagit Watershed Council to discuss future management of the new conservation area on upper Day Creek.

& Wildlife, and The Nature Conservancy, the former Martin property is the missing piece in this important area where the Illabot Creek meets the Skagit River. These tributary junctions tend to be biological hotspots because nutrients enter the river from the creek creating more diversity and a richer habitat.

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Cover photo of eagle by Phil Green

From the Executive Director

Dear Members,

We are in the midst of a difficult time. On top of the financial woes, Mother Earth decided to throw a few curve balls at us in the form of near-record snowfall and then, flooding in the Samish and mud and landslides up river. Yet through all this I am impressed with this community's resilience.

Resilience – it is a word I hope we see and hear more of in this decade and beyond. We need it as a community and the land and wildlife need it as we face unprecedented changes to our environment. We must do everything we can to avert emergent problems. We must also learn to manage our lands so that they build resilience to climate change, to flooding, to population pressures and to altering water supplies.

As a land trust our focus is on conserving land for now and the future. If we only focused on land that is threatened today, we would have more than enough to deal with. Yet we must also plan for the changes that are coming and get in front of them as best we can before they take enormous efforts to fix. An example is our work on the Skagit River east of Sedro-Woolley where our protection efforts, alongside those of our many partners, are helping to conserve a corridor where natural river processes can occur. This protects and helps to restore high quality fish and wildlife habitat today and keeps building off the active floodplain. It will benefit future wildlife and communities in ways we can't even imagine as they face enormous changes coming in the next 100 years.

In order to both educate ourselves and offer our perspective, many of us are involving ourselves in collaborative local planning and visioning processes that deal with our lands and resources

now and tomorrow. For example, I am a member of the Task Force for Sustainability and Climate Change, Martha Bray is a member of the conservation technical committee



of the Alternative Futures Project and

Patsy Martin serves on the steering committee, and board member Bob Boudinot chairs the Flood Control Zone District Advisory Committee.

We can't precisely predict the impact of changes that are both upon us and coming, but it is undisputed that a generous-sized natural environment in the Skagit will give this and future communities, as well as wildlife, a far better chance of adapting and of being resilient.

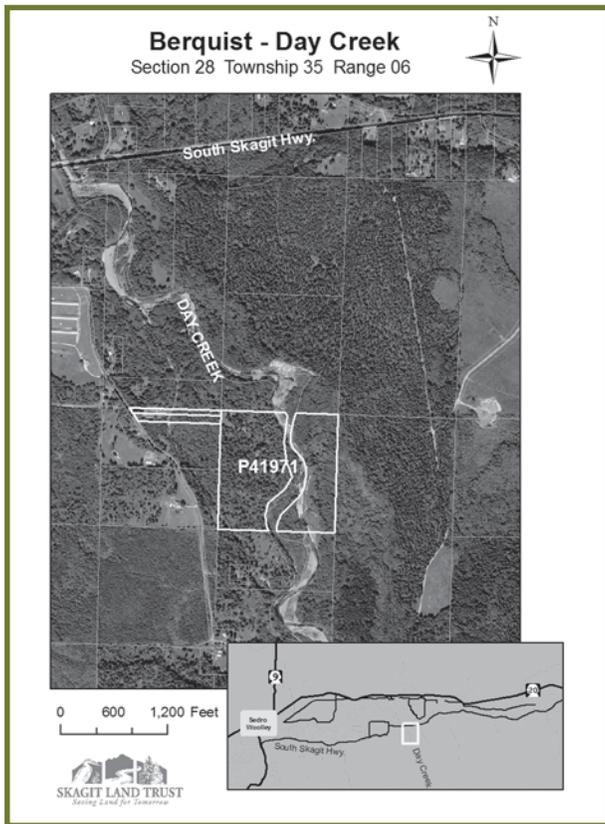
Thank you for helping to conserve the important lands and waterways of Skagit County. It is essential work.

Molly Doran,



Executive Director

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The SRFB grant received builds on previous awards to Skagit Land Trust & The Nature Conservancy. This collaboration has helped lead the way for numerous miles of protection of the Skagit River. Below right: Our picturesque Cumberland Creek Conservation Area is used for photo & birding tours as well as benefiting salmon and other wildlife.



“We are very keen on protecting these kind of floodplain processes. Land uses and efforts to control the river tend to simplify and constrain the river system, and over time take away important side channel habitat,” said Conservation Director Martha Bray who oversaw the protection of these properties for the Trust. “The parcel lies in the heart of the Skagit River Bald Eagle Natural Area. In many respects it is the hole in the donut of one of the most productive and protected reaches of the Skagit River system,” commented Bob Carey, Skagit River Program Director for The Nature Conservancy. The Martin property consists entirely of key riparian floodplain habitat, part of it is in cleared pasture and part is still forested. “Jane was instrumental in the successful negotiation of this sale and it was quite an accomplishment,” Carey noted.

Skagit Land Trust and The Nature Conservancy work together to protect salmon habitat in the Upper Skagit River Area between Concrete and the Park boundary. Whereas The Nature Conservancy typically does the research for projects in this area and manages the property once protected, Skagit Land Trust often assists by doing the outreach and purchase negotiations.

The Skagit Watershed Council provides oversight and recommended the purchases to the Salmon Recovery Funding Board. A fifth partner, Seattle City Light, was of great assistance in these particular acquisitions as land they protected on the Skagit River near Concrete was allowed to be used as “match” thus lowering acquisition expenses for the The Nature Conservancy and Skagit Land Trust.

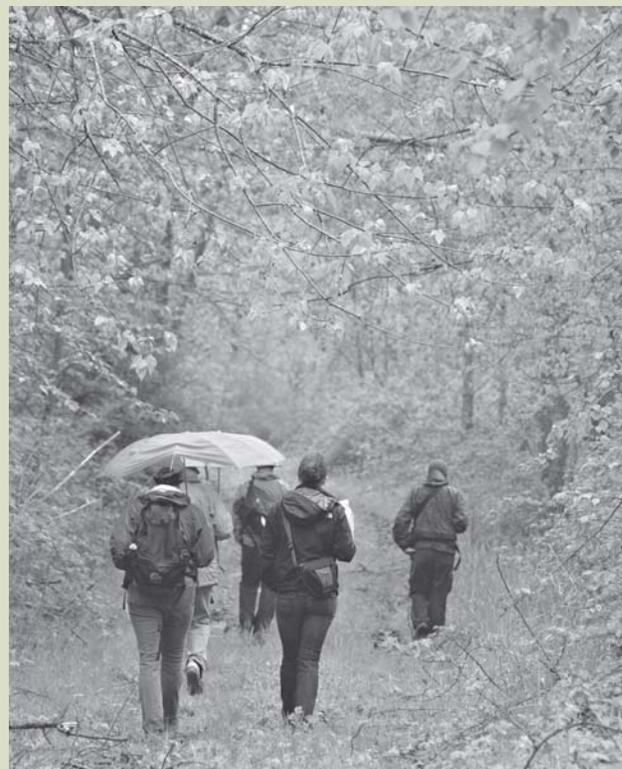


Photo by Steve Philbrick

Stewardship Update

Stewardship Interpretive Project Update

Following upon the well-received interpretive signs at Hurn Elk Field, we are planning several additional interpretive displays at other properties. There are two displays currently in the works: The first will be installed at our Green Road Marsh Conservation Area (formerly Butler Flats), at the corner of Green Rd. and Kelleher Rd. (pictured), and will explain the natural history of this wetland as it relates to the historic Olympia Marsh. The second interpretive sign will be placed along the Tommy Thompson trail above Fidalgo Bay, which is protected with a SLT conservation easement, along the old railroad trestle. We hope to have both of these signs installed by this spring or summer.

Winter Stewardship Update

Skagit Land Trust stewardship field work will kick into high gear this late winter and early spring, with projects at numerous properties. Although a final workplan is still being formulated, the following projects are likely to occur in the next few months:

- **Tope Ryan Conservation Area** – Continue plantings in the main pasture to convert it to woodland and maintain the plantings already in place.
- **Lyman Slough Conservation Area** – Restore areas damaged by the installation of large-woody debris structures placed in the slough to improve salmon habitat.
- **Cumberland Creek Conservation Area** – Maintain the existing trail network and restoration plantings by cutting back weeds.
- **Hurn Field Conservation Area** – Retrieve blue tree protectors from original restoration plantings.
- **Barr Creek Conservation Area** – Begin work on parking pullout, signage and trail maintenance.

Please join us in helping to protect Skagit Land Trust's conservation areas by attending a field work party. Dates and times for specific events will be posted on our web site, or email trustad@fidalgo.net to be added to our stewardship email list.

**OLYMPIA MARSH
GREEN ROAD MARSH**

Here at Green Road Marsh, Skagit Land Trust preserves 42 acres of a larger wetland. This area was once part of Olympia Marsh, whose more than 10,000 acres stretched from here to Padilla Bay. In the late 19th and early 20th centuries, marsh and swamp occupied many unforested areas of western Skagit County. Farmers installed cedar-lined drains in order to farm the very rich soil.

SKAGIT LAND TRUST
Skagit Land Trust conserves lands vital to Skagit County's natural heritage for the benefit of our community and as a legacy for future generations. This mission is accomplished through voluntary conservation methods including land purchases and permanent conservation agreements with landowners. Once land is protected, staff and volunteers restore and maintain the Trust's conservation areas.

MARSH WILDLIFE

More than 30 bird species use this wetland. Watch for slow flying Northern Harriers hunting rodents.

Marshes attract Ring-necked Ducks and many other waterfowl on which Bald Eagles prey.

The duck, duck, duck call of the Marsh Wren makes this year-round resident conspicuous in spring and early summer. Both the bird and its soft-lined nest are hard to spot.

Flurred otters, attracted beaver to return here and build a lodge. Otters and Beaver Muskrats were the largest in Skagit County.

The Common Yellowthroat breeds here but migrates south to winter from California to Central America. Listen for males singing while they winter.

Marshes are home to Red-legged Frogs and other insect eating amphibians which in turn feed Great Blue Herons and other species.

PUBLIC ACCESS AND HUNTING
Skagit Land Trust manages Green Road Marsh for the benefit of waterfowl and other wildlife. To maximize wildlife disturbance, public access is limited - please enjoy the wetland from the road. This property is closed to hunting. Contact the Trust at 360-458-9788 for information about public access on other properties.

PARTNERS IN PRESERVATION
Lucky Seven Foundation
Natural Resources Conservation Service (Wildland Reserve Program)
Washington Department of Fish & Wildlife
Skagit Land Trust Volunteers

Skagit Land Trust volunteers have contributed many hours to restoring and protecting this wetland.



Northern Harriers and Great Blue Herons are frequent visitors to wetland areas.

Photos by Phil Green



The Green Road Marsh Conservation Area interpretive sign will give a brief history of this important 42 acre wetland preserved by Skagit Land Trust in partnership with the Natural Resource Conservation Service.

Welcome Sue Edelberg

Hello! My name is Sue and I am the Americorps Volunteer Coordinator from North Carolina. I have had the opportunity to meet several of you around the office and at our events, but there are still many of you whose acquaintance I have yet to meet. It has been a wonderful three months thus far at the Trust and I can't wait to get out in the field and do some plantings in the spring. Please join me!



Skagit's Natural Life-support System

by guest writer, Ralph Heft

Skagit Valley's natural life-support system consists of the land, water, air, and living things. This natural system is dynamic. Changes to it may be triggered by natural events and by human activity.

Prior to 1800, forests and wildlife occupied most of the land and human demands on fish, wildlife, and plants were within the ability of the land to supply them. This has changed dramatically. In the early part of the 1900's, families depended on the production of the land for their sustenance. By the end of the century, improvements in transportation and communication technology made it possible to live in Skagit Valley without a natural resource job. The demand for family living space continues to grow. Humans increasingly occupy farm land, forest, and fish and wildlife habitat.

Throughout history the overuse of ecosystems — natural life-support systems — has resulted in species extinction and the collapse of human societies. Jared Diamond's book, *Collapse: How societies choose to fail or succeed*, gives several examples including the Anasazi in the southwestern U. S. where people abandoned their settlements and the Easter Islanders where most of the population died of starvation because they were not able

to escape the island. Although we have the transportation today to escape local ecological disasters, we are running out of places to go. If we don't manage our life support system wisely, Earth may become Easter Island.

Wangari Muta Maathai, Nobel Peace Prize Laureate from Kenya, recently noted that God created humans on the sixth day instead of the first because they needed all the other creations to survive. She highlights the need for us to conserve God's gift of a natural life-support system in order to insure our own survival.

Fortunately, the Skagit Valley's natural life-support system is still in fairly good condition with the exception of a few key areas such as salmon habitat and flood pathways. This gives us the chance to make a real difference for our future. If we choose to make the necessary land conservation decisions now, we still have an opportunity to maintain the portions of the system that are working and to restore those that are not.

Skagit Land Trust is a leader in land conservation which is critical to our survival in Skagit Valley. With your support, we can continue to conserve and restore our natural life-support system for ourselves and for posterity.

Ralph Heft is a board member of the Trust and former land manager for the Bureau of Land Management. He currently owns and runs Big Lake Tree Farm with his wife Ruth.

“Natural Skagit: A Journey from Mountains to Sea” Launched November 13th

“Natural Skagit makes for a gorgeous coffee table book, what with its first-rate photography and compelling historic tales of Puget Sound’s most well-preserved county and the river that runs through it. But it’s more than that. For one, its epilogue is penned by a Pulitzer-Prize winner, former Seattle Times scribe Bill Dietrich. And the book’s foreword is nothing short of naturalistic poetry. Its author: Tom Robbins, to whom the Magic Skagit obviously means the world.” (Review in Seattle Weekly, Dec. 16, 2008)

Skagit Land Trust’s premier coffee-table book “Natural Skagit” launched in November at Skagit Valley Gardens with 425 people in attendance. Internationally renowned author Tom Robbins, Pulitzer-Prize winning journalist Bill Dietrich and acclaimed photographer Lee Mann were the keynote speakers in an evening of celebrating the Skagit. We sold an astounding 1,200 books at the event. Thank you to our ten book launch sponsors and to all of the authors, photographers, staff, board and behind-the-scenes helpers that helped to make the book (and the launch) such a great success! A huge thank you to Patricia Chambers, project manager and creative director.



Photo by Steve Philbrick



(Above, left to right) Pulitzer-Prize winning journalist Bill Dietrich, renowned author Tom Robbins, and acclaimed photographer Lee Mann were the keynote speakers at the Skagit Land Trust’s book launch celebration at Skagit Valley Gardens. Renata Hoyle Maybruck (top) was the Trust project director. (Below left) A rare photo of a bobcat from the “Natural Skagit” book by Steve Philbrick and (below) a river otter enjoys a tasty meal of crab.



Photo by Phil Green

“Natural Skagit” has received enthusiastic support from the community, selling almost three times as fast as we expected. The book was a Skagit bestseller over the holidays. Thirteen retail outlets now carry “Natural Skagit”, as well as sales in our office and online on our website www.skagitlandtrust.org. Skagit Land Trust donated books to all of the county public libraries, local and state politician’s offices and several partner agencies. In addition, Keith and Jan Wiggers donated a book to each of the county high schools.

Most importantly, the book is augmenting the community’s conservation ethic. People over and over again have said “It really shows how special this place is and why it’s called the Magic Skagit. We need to work to save it.” That’s exactly what we want to hear.



Photo by Suzanne Fogarty

Steering Committee

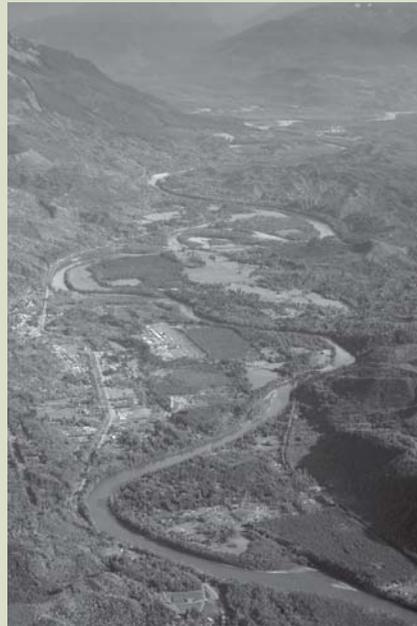


Photo by Christine Kitch



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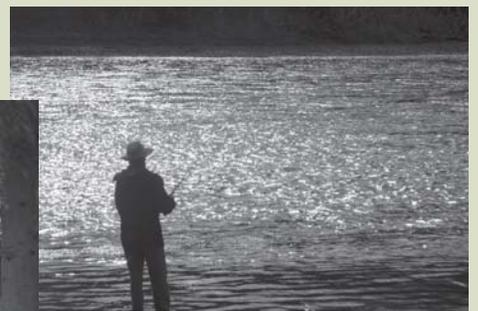


Photo by Christine Kitch



Photo Committee

Photo by Suzanne Fogarty

Join Us for Skagit Land Trust's Annual Meeting

Friday, March 20, 2009 from 6-9pm at Maple Hall – La Conner

6 pm – Social hour, appetizers, refreshments

7 pm – Trust year in review, elections and updates, short business meeting & awards

8 pm –Dr. Estella Leopold speaking on the History of Puget Sound Flora

Dr. Estella Leopold, the youngest daughter of Aldo Leopold, is a professor emeritus of botany in the Biology Department at the University of Washington.

After receiving a Ph.D. in plant sciences from Yale University in 1956 Dr Leopold went to work for the U.S. Geological Survey in its paleontology laboratory in Denver. Her scientific work there combined with organizing a major scientific political battle that resulted in the creation of the Florissant Fossil Beds National Monument, a 6,000-acre reserve in central Colorado that is home to one of the richest and most diverse deposits of plant and insect fossils in the world.

During her career, Estella has authored more than 100 scientific publications. Her research has focused on the use of fossil pollen and seeds to determine the regional history of climate change, origin of grasslands, desert tundra and forest types, as well as evolution of herbs and woody plants. Estella has been an ardent supporter of conservation throughout her life and is an active member of the board of the Aldo Leopold Foundation. Estella is a lively and knowledgeable speaker on the topic of the history of flora in the Puget Sound area. We are honored to have her be the keynote speaker at our annual meeting.

Proposed amendments to Skagit Land Trust by-laws and board elections to be held at the Annual Meeting, March 20, 2009 at Maple Hall.

Each membership has one vote.

There are several proposed changes to the by-laws that will be presented to the membership and will be voted on during the business meeting segment. The proposed changes can be found on-line at www.skagitlandtrust.org and will also be available at the meeting.



Board Elections

The following people are up for election or re-election for 3-year terms to Skagit Land Trust's board of directors:

Ron Feld (re-election), David Hall (re-election), Mark Hitchcock (re-election), Rusty Kuntze (re-election), Keith Wiggers (re-election), Dr Steve Johnson (election), Brenda Cunningham (election). Short biographies of these individuals can be found on our website and will be presented at the Annual Meeting.

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*Donations to the Barr Creek
campaign were listed in the
Barr Creek flyer, fall of 2008.
Thank you!*

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Mission Statement

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

Saving Land for Tomorrow

Upcoming Events

March 20th - Annual Meeting

at Maple Hall, La Conner - 6-9pm
Guest speaker: Dr. Estella Leopold

June 27th - Land Steward Hosted Van Tour

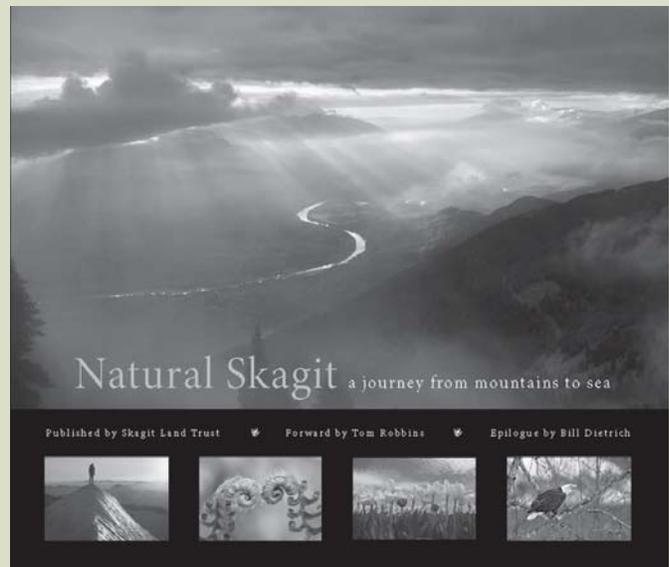
Middle Skagit River

August 15th - Annual Picnic

at Schoolhouse Park, Guemes Island – 1-4pm
Tours of Guemes Mountain 10am - noon
shuttle transportation from ferry will be available

September 17th - Conservation Breakfast

at CottonTree Inn, Mount Vernon – 7-8:30am



“Natural Skagit” has received enthusiastic support from the community, selling almost three times as fast as we expected. The book was a Skagit bestseller over the holidays. Thirteen retail outlets now carry “Natural Skagit”, as well as sales in our office and online on our website www.skagitlandtrust.org. All proceeds go directly to land conservation.