

Spring 2012



The Steward

Cowichan Estuary Nature Centre **Doors opening to the public April 21!**



The Nature Centre will officially open on Saturday, April 21st. We'll open up the building at 1pm so you can have a look around and enjoy some music and nibbles, and, of course, the very best of Mother Nature! There will be activities for kids, and the opening ceremony with ribbon cutting will be at 3pm. Read more about the Nature Centre on Page 2!

If you are interested in volunteering, check out our new Cowichan Estuary Nature Centre website at: www.cowichanestuary.ca

www.cowichanlandtrust.ca

Cowichan Estuary Nature Centre

We are now very near to realizing our dream of creating a Nature Centre for the Cowichan Estuary.



After a year of carrying out our vision for the Nature Centre through the many practicalities of writing grant applications, getting major grants approved from the West Coast Community Adjustment Program (WCCAP) and the Island Coastal Economic Trust (ICET), spearheading a successful local fundraising campaign, exploring site options, working hard with the

CVRD and community partners to find it a physical home, we have finally arrived!

The Nature Centre overlooks the water at Hecate Park in Cowichan Bay. The Wildlife Viewing Platform at the western end of Hecate Park is complete and opened on March 2nd.

The Interpretive Nature Classroom is located on the eastern edge of the park's grassy area, on the far west side of the parking area.



Building construction is now complete and we are hard at work on the indoor interpretive installations! Both the classroom building and the viewing platform were constructed by MacDonald Lawrence Timber Framing, who did the Kinsol Trestle restoration and built the beautiful addition to the Cowichan Bay Maritime Centre.



The Nature Centre Classroom building faces west looking up the estuary toward the channels of the Koksilah and Cowichan Rivers. Interpretive trails extend along the shore to the west where the Land Trust and the

CVRD have worked together to create a model green shores restoration that recovers eroded shoreline and protects it against future damage. In this process the five or so regular car parking spaces (not boat trailer parking) were taken up in the main parking area have been replaced by 11 new parking spaces on the west side of the park.

We are now working on the design, creation and installation of outdoor signage and indoor interactive



interpretive displays that will illustrate estuary life, including a three dimensional eelgrass meadow; look at human impacts on the ecosystem; and integrate historic

cultural and culinary components, reflecting the importance of the estuary ecosystem to the aboriginal community. Interpretive elements will include: A wildlife viewing telescope that can be used at the wildlife viewing platform; an aquarium and touch tank where visitors can roll up their sleeves, reach in and touch some of the estuary's living marine organisms; a microscope station for viewing the smallest of estuary life; and a web cam that can zoom in on estuary bird life.

We want to thank everyone who has contributed to making this vision a reality. We are truly grateful for your support! We also welcome your ongoing contributions. Your donations will be invested in ensuring the Centre has high quality interpretive displays that are able to be renewed seasonally to keep them fresh and interesting, keeping visitors coming back, and towards the Centre's operating budget. All donations receive charitable receipts.



Submitted by Jane Kilthi

Photo: Eric Marshall

Donate!

Make a donation online at:

www.cowichanlandtrust.ca/help

or by cheque to: **Cowichan Land Trust**

6 – 55 Station Street, Duncan, BC V9L 1M2.

Please indicate that your donation is for the Cowichan Estuary Nature Centre.

Cowichan Bay beach restoration and trail

The Cowichan Land Trust's Job Creation Partnership Project and the Cowichan Valley Regional District worked together this winter to restore a beach in Cowichan Bay. The beach, located near Hecate Park, has been eroding towards the road at rate of up to one metre or more of land every year. If this continued, the road would have soon become beach.

After extensive research and consultation, a restoration plan was developed. The plan took principles, such as beach nourishment, from



the Greenshores guidelines. Beach nourishment is the process of adding new sand, gravel and/or cobble to a beach. This doesn't stop erosion but the new material gives the waves something to erode. Large logs were placed at the bottom of the eroded slope and along the top of the beach. These logs help keep the new sand and gravel in place, break waves as



they hit the beach and provide habitat for plants and animals. Native trees, shrubs and ground covers were the finishing touch to help hold the beach together.

A gravel trail also extends the existing trail from Hecate Park to new parking spaces along Cowichan Bay Road.

On March 12th, we experienced a massive storm event that blew 100 km/hr winds directly at the beach. This unfortunately caused a lot of damage to the new restoration. Although it was sad to see our hard work and effort so easily re-arranged by Mother Nature, the restoration did its job and protected the road and underground utilities. The CVRD will fix up the restoration site, and hopefully by next storm season the plants will have established themselves and the roots will be working to hold the logs and new materials in place.

International Low Tide Day Saturday May 5 9am-1:30pm



Join us for a free family event, open to everyone! Activities begin at 9:00 am at Kil-pa-las Beach in Cowichan Bay, and include:

- Beach Seine with DFO biologists
- Critter Count with Dr. Bill Austin
- Community beach and trail cleanup
- Food, music, and fun!

Did you know??

You can donate monthly to the Cowichan Land Trust through Canada Helps. Visit our website at: www.cowichanlandtrust.ca/help and click on the "Donate Now" icon:



You will be directed to Canada Help's website, where you can indicate you'd like to make a repeating donation, deducted monthly from your credit card. It's that simple!

Amphibian Watch 2012

Spring is here and amphibians are on the move again returning to Wake Lake and other wetlands to lay their eggs. The Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure are continuing their support to gather information about Western Toad migration patterns in order to determine the best place for an underpass near Wake Lake. Road surveys started in early March and will continue through to early June. Adult toads have been observed heading back to the lake, as well as Pacific Chorus Frogs,



Rough-skinned Newts, and Western Red-backed Salamanders. Egg mass surveys are also being added to the research this year in order to confirm Northern

Red-legged Frogs and other salamanders at Wake Lake.

At present we are waiting to hear if we will be able to install directive fencing and pitfall traps again this summer for the juvenile Western Toad migration. We will keep you posted of any volunteer opportunities! It is an amazing event of nature to watch thousands of tiny toads making their way out into world and extremely rewarding to help them on their way. Stay tuned for more details to come and remember to watch out for amphibians on warm, wet nights. For more information about frogs and salamanders or to report a sighting, visit the BC Frog Watch website at:

<http://www.env.gov.bc.ca/wld/frogwatch/>

Submitted by Shari Willmott

We would like to say a big **THANK YOU** to those of you who have shown your support by donating through the scrap metal campaign and/or our Bottle Drive in December. To date, we've made nearly \$1300 through these campaigns!

It's not too late!! Both Steel Pacific and the Cowichan Valley Bottle Depot will continue to accept donations on our behalf!



Friends of Cowichan Creeks



Now that winter is over and it's officially spring, get out and enjoy the sunshine! Spring is always an exciting time in nature; the trees are budding, flowers blooming and baby animals abound. It's also the time when juvenile salmonids emerge from their gravel dens! So, when you're out enjoying nature, be careful that you (and your pet) do not disturb gravels during this critical time!

This past winter, we have been working on the Cowichan Creeks Habitat Restoration Plan. This plan uses information collected last summer from Averill, Askew and Quamichan creeks to determine activities that can be done by volunteers to help restore the riparian habitat. Habitat surveys recommenced this February on Churchill, Handysen and Treffery creeks, and these will also be added to the Plan. We hope to start planning more work parties in the upcoming months to carry out some of the activities from the plan. So, keep checking our website and your emails for future volunteer events!

In February, we hosted the Bioengineering Course, taught again by Dave Polster. The participants helped



restore an eroding creek bank in Fairview Park (near Drinkwater School) with a "wattle fence" and "live stakes". A grant from the Pacific Salmon Foundation will

allow us to host another 2 Streamkeeper courses (see page 5) and an In-stream restoration workshop again this year. And will (most importantly!) help keep the workshop fees for participants low!

In other news, our Project Coordinator, Jen Morgen, has accepted another job opportunity. She thoroughly enjoyed working on this project and is grateful to have met some really energetic and dedicated volunteers. Kai Rietzel will take over coordinating this project.

If you are interested in becoming a volunteer streamkeeper, would like to be added to our streamkeeper email list or want to sign up for one of our courses, please contact Kai at **250-746-0227** or email: kai@cowichanlandtrust.ca.

Streamkeepers Course

May 12 & 13 • 9am-4pm



Learn the skills required to evaluate, measure and monitor potential fish-bearing streams

Course includes practical in-class training and field work on a Cowichan Valley creek

Registration Required

Cost: \$60 members, \$90 non-members
(includes lunch & refreshments)
\$20 Streamkeeper Handbook (optional)

We would like to thank our Spring Newsletter contributors Jane Kilthei, Jen Morgen, Kai Rietzel and Shari Willmott. Also thank you to The Land Conservancy of BC and Garry Oak Ecosystem Recovery Team for additional content.

Fishing Derby

Saturday April 28th

9am to 2pm
Art Mann Park
Quamichan Lake

- *Prizes
- *Hamburger BBQ
- *Roll-A-Dock Demo
- *Kids Activities
- *Learn How to Fish
- *E.J. Hughes Print Draw

\$5 Derby Registration

Makes you eligible for prizes
Men, Women & Kids



For more information or to volunteer call
250-746-0227 or email kai@quamichanlake.ca

Pony Up for the Point

TLC Member and Cowichan Valley Resident, Jim Wisnia, has decided that it's time to "Pony Up for the Point". To assist with the campaign to raise funds for Sansum Point, Jim has pledged to cut off this pony-tail once he has raised \$5,000.

Jim first began growing his hair a little longer when he found it kept his neck warm while working outside at the North Vancouver Outdoor School. His current pony-tail, which



is about 12 inches long, has been in the works for the last couple of years. In the back of his mind he always thought he might be able to use it for a fundraiser.

As someone who loves a good hook, "Pony up for the Point" was a perfect fit. "Sansum Point is a very special property and is a wonderful amendment for the Stoney Hill Area," said Jim. "From diverse marine shore fauna to skyline rocky outcrop plant communities, there are so many reasons the property is worth protecting. It's important that we continue to help raise the funds required to encourage more partnerships with local government in the future. It will also free up TLC to focus on other important projects."

Jim and his wife Lyn were happy to donate to help save Sansum Point when the opportunity first arose in early 2011. As long-time TLC Members, they love to get out and enjoy nature and have a deep appreciation for the important natural and cultural values of Sansum Point.

Through his endless enthusiasm Jim hopes to inspire his friends and many others to Pony Up for the Point. The highest donation will even have the option to be the one to cut off the pony-tail!

Join Jim and Pony up for the Point today!

Submitted by The Land Conservancy

Bluebirds returning to the Cowichan Valley!

Do you remember Western Bluebirds? These native songbirds once thrived in our local Garry Oak ecosystems but have gradually disappeared and are now considered extirpated (locally extinct). Western Bluebirds are one of more than 100 species at risk in Garry Oak and associated ecosystems. With your help, we can bring them back!



The Garry Oak Ecosystems Recovery Team (GOERT) and our partners in the Bring Back the Bluebirds project have been putting up nestboxes in suitable habitat

for several years. However, experts tell us that we need a re-introduction to jumpstart the population. Building on the success of a five-year re-introduction program on neighbouring San Juan Island, we are preparing to bring pairs of Western Bluebirds from healthy populations in Fort Lewis, Washington, to the beautiful Cowichan Garry Oak Preserve (thanks to our partners at Nature Conservancy of Canada) in Maple Bay. After an adjustment period, the birds will be released to find their own homes.

If you think you may have suitable bluebird habitat on your property (Garry Oak woodland or pasture, free of cats and invasive English House Sparrows) and would like to host a nestbox, or if you'd like to volunteer as a nestbox monitor, please read the information on our website, view examples of good habitat, then contact us (see below). Everyone in the valley can help by watching for bluebirds and reporting sightings—or better yet—nesting activity!

Please see www.goert.ca/bluebird or contact GOERT at bluebird@goert.ca or 250-383-3427.

Submitted by Garry Oak Ecosystems Recovery Team

Membership

Membership to the Cowichan Land Trust is an important contribution to our continued presence in the Cowichan Valley and makes it possible for us to continue our work to conserve our natural heritage.

If you are interested in becoming a member, please fill out and send the form below to our office, or sign up online at:

www.cowichanlandtrust.ca/content/membership

Yes! I want to become a member of the Cowichan Land Trust

Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____

Postal Code: _____

Telephone: _____

Email: _____

MEMBERSHIP & DONATIONS

- ☐ Youth Membership (under 19).....\$5
- ☐ Family Membership.....\$20
- ☐ Supporter/Business.....\$100
- ☐ Patron.....\$250
- ☐ Benefactor.....\$500
- ☐ Conservator.....\$1000
- ☐ Major Donor.....\$5000

Cheque enclosed for \$ _____

- ☐ I'd like to contribute my time or expertise
- ☐ Please contact me to discuss estate planning or leaving a bequest
- ☐ Please contact me about protecting my land

Mail Payment to:

**Cowichan Land Trust
6 – 55 Station Street
Duncan, B.C.
V9L1M2**

The Cowichan Land Trust thanks our current funders!



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