

CENTRAL OKANAGAN LAND TRUST

Legacy

...a newsletter of the Central Okanagan Land Trust

COLT's Gone Batty by Judie Steeves

With a mighty heave, four Central Okanagan Land Trust volunteers pushed the new bat 'hotel' erect in the 324-hectare Johns Family Nature Conservancy Regional Park in May, 2020, ready for occupancy.

It's just one of many projects undertaken in the past five years by COLT to monitor and enhance habitat for the many different species of bats that inhabit this region.

Under the leadership of now-retired board member, Hugh Westheuser, bat microphone monitors which can help identify various species by their calls, have been installed within the park.

The work is part of a province-wide study into the nocturnal mammals to help determine which species make the park their home; where they hang out and overwinter.

Westheuser began by enlisting the aid of respected bat biologist Mike Sarell from Oliver who spent a day in 2017 touring the COLT property, which is owned by the trust, but managed as a regional park—with only a portion of it open to the public.

He was looking for possible bat hibernacula, nurseries or roosting sites, including rocky habitat such as that around The Craggs. He later used three acoustical bat recorders to pick up the echolocation calls of foraging bats for five days. In that time, he counted 13 species of the 16 in this province, half of those rare and of a conservation concern.

Interest in bat behaviour is of particular focus now due to their threat from White-nose Syndrome, which infects bats when they are in torpor. It has killed thousands of bats in eastern North America and has now reached nearby Washington State.

COLT purchased two bat recorders in 2018 and has been collecting data on the mammals with assistance from Tina Deenik of Ecoscape Environmental Consultants, who is training as a bat consultant. A computer program is needed to analyze the raw data with the help of a trained specialist such as Deenik.

This research is ongoing on the property.

The collection of bat data has been expanded in the past year, with COLT moving one monitor into the Benvoulin Woods, which is also



Photo — Judie Steeves
Johns Family Nature Conservancy Regional Park

owned by COLT, and purchasing a trail camera to identify wildlife uses of that property, which is adjacent to the Mission Creek Greenway.

Board member Barry Jones is conducting this research and notes it emphasizes COLT's commitment to the stewardship of its properties.

President's Report

Gord Savage



A year ago at this time we were beginning to experience the hard reality of a global pandemic and now, a full year later, we are still greatly impacted by this serious virus. It has been interesting to see how the population has adapted to use this time to get outdoors to walk, hike, run, and bike in our abundant parks and trail systems. Sporting goods stores cannot keep up with the demand for outdoor gear. This again stresses the importance of the work that COLT does to preserve and protect our natural wetlands and grassland habitats. It is not necessarily for human activity but for protection of the biodiversity of these unique environments.

Regardless of the pandemic, COLT has been extremely active throughout this past year. Our board has continued to meet regularly via Zoom meetings, and we have set up various project committees to focus our efforts. We have continued to work closely with the regional district and City of Kelowna parks staff on a variety of initiatives including wetland area management plans, the Mission Creek Restoration Initiative, bat monitoring, and Black Mountain Regional Park, just to name a few.

The work we do is also becoming more visible throughout the Central Okanagan which is generating interest from individuals and families who wish to protect natural habitat either through legal covenants or direct transfer of land ownership.

One of our longest-standing board members, Hugh Westheuser, chose to step away from his board duties after over 27 years of service. His efforts through the years, particularly his stewardship of the John's Family Nature Conservancy, have been a huge asset to our community. He is going to be missed, but he remains a mentor to all of us in helping to stay on track. With Hugh stepping aside, the need to identify new board members yielded three excellent new board members who are profiled in this newsletter. I believe the future of COLT is in good hands and I'm looking forward to the years ahead of us. I wish to thank all of our generous donors and patrons, my fellow board members, and our community partners in helping us to achieve our goals.

Gord Savage
President – Central Okanagan Land Trust

Executive Director Report

Wayne Wilson



When I thought about writing this brief report for COLT's newsletter, I first thought there wouldn't be much to say. After all, this pandemic has certainly slowed the pace of just about everything.

What I quickly discovered was that, despite the trials so many of us have faced over the past months, COLT did quite a lot! Perhaps the

simplest way to give a sense of that production is to give you a catalogue of some of that work:

- Draft Management Plan for Munson Pond
- Draft Management Plan for Thomson Marsh
- Draft Management Plan for Chichester Pond
- Draft Management Plan for Maude Roxby Marsh
- Draft invasive plant management plan – Munson Pond
- Submission of the Johns Family Nature Conservancy Regional Park as a 'Dark Sky' preserve

- Initial meetings for the donation of acreage in the Okanagan Mission area
- Initial meetings for the donation of acreage in Lake County
- Application for major funding toward the purchase of parkland in the region
- Added work and study of bat populations in the region
- The annual and ongoing site inspection work carried out by Board members on COLT properties and Conservation Covenant lands
-and this is only a partial list! So you can see, the Board was hard at work to protect the environmental values of our region.

This was COLT's 30th Anniversary Year, and we were hoping to make a much bigger splash of that event. While the pandemic got the best of those plans, we settled back in and just got work done to support the region's fragile and at-risk wildlife and habitats. In all of this work, we benefit from your support.

Thank you for your continued help with this work!

Wayne Wilson – Executive Director

Dark Sky – Nocturnal Preserve

by Isabella Hodson, RDCO



As sunny skies and cloudless nights return to the Okanagan after a lingering winter, we are running full steam ahead with our Nocturnal Preserve application for Johns Family Nature Conservancy Regional Park. We've now completed our Existing Light Fixture Inventory and Lighting Plan along with many other application components. Parks staff are now collecting images of the preserve's observation sites both in daylight and at nighttime, and the coordinated Zenith Sky Quality Measurement readings that are so crucial to the application and which can only be recorded on clear nights. We expect to complete all of the sky brightness readings and application components by the end of this month, and are already planning some dark sky programming for this summer, including night hikes and star talks in the public portion of the preserve in August. Although it has been over a year since we received Board and COLT approval to undertake this project, we are all tremendously excited by the possibility of having an approved Dark Sky Preserve before the end of 2021. Stay tuned for more updates after we submit the application!

Board Members



Leah Schurian

Leah was born and raised in Kelowna. Her childhood was spent exploring Joe Rich around her family's rural home. She completed an undergraduate degree at UBC (Okanagan Campus) in International Relations before continuing on to law school. She completed her Juris Doctor at the University of Alberta in 2013 and was called to the British Columbia Bar in 2014. She practiced at a leading regional firm and another small Kelowna firm before setting out on her own as a sole practitioner. Leah divides her time between her small practice and caring for her two young children and two rescued dogs. She has been a long-time governance volunteer with the BC SPCA. She has previously served

on the board of directors for a local theatre production society. She currently serves as the President (and is a founding member) of the Friends of Woodhaven Nature Conservancy Society. She also volunteers for the RDCO Environmental Advisory Commission. Leah is thrilled to have the opportunity to combine her education with her passion for conservation and restoration.

Create a legacy
CENTRAL OKANAGAN
LAND TRUST

Our Mission

...to protect land for wildlife and parks so biodiversity and natural features are preserved for future generations.

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Steve Thomson - Director

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Ex Officio – Representative, Regional District Central Okanagan

Central Okanagan Land Trust
306-1726 Dolphin Ave.
Kelowna, BC V1Y 9R9
Email: info@coltrust.ca
www.coltrust.ca

Charitable Corporation Number: 13695 7198 RR0001

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Steve Thomson

Steve was born and raised on the Thomson family farm in Okanagan Mission and has a long record of service to the community. He represented Kelowna Mission as the MLA from 2009 to 2017 and served as Minister of Agriculture and Lands, Minister of Forests, Lands and Natural Resources and Rural Development.

Steve is the former executive director of the BC Agriculture Council and has spent much of his

career working on behalf of British Columbian farmers and ranchers. He has served as general manager of the BC Fruit Growers Association and the BC Milk Producers Association. He has also served as the President of the Kelowna Chamber of Commerce and as a director of the Kelowna Museum and the Okanagan Innovation Fund.

He has a great love of sports and had a long career in rugby including the opportunity to play for the Canadian National Rugby Team.

Steve is a husband, father and grandfather. He and his wife Brenda have three children and five grandchildren.



Colin Pritchard

Colin grew up in the North Okanagan where he got an early appreciation for the value of the agricultural industries in the regional economy and beyond. While his background is in law, Colin's longer career focus was in business development where his successful enterprises included cattle, sheep, and poultry farming. In addition, his enterprises included commercial real estate development.

Colin is retired from both his businesses and from law, but he remains active in the community through his work in philanthropy.

Rock Structures Help Fish

By Don Knox

It is a challenge to try to help nature do things in a way that works. The goal of the Mission Creek Restoration Initiative (MCRI) is to help rectify some of the problems that were created when Mission Creek was channelized decades ago to prevent flooding. In 2019 the MCRI committee created two new rock structures in the creek to provide habitat for both kokanee and rainbow trout. Each cluster of rocks consisted of four boulders arranged in a diamond shape with the apex pointing upstream.

The results from monitoring in 2020 indicate they remained stable and helped create pools as well as helping deposit gravel for spawning kokanee.

Kokanee desire a uniform, very specific-sized gravel so the females can move the material to make their redd or nest.

Smaller gravel size prevents the eggs from receiving sufficient oxygen and larger sizes can be too difficult to move by the female so the eggs may be exposed to predation. There was much higher spawning in the section downstream of the rock structures.

As well, a series of six boulder lines in the shape of hockey sticks were installed along the right bank of the channel to direct more water into a meander pool or side channel, which had been created to mimic the natural behaviour of the creek.

The results in 2020 showed the boulders remained in place and were successful in increasing flows to the notch opened to the side channel.

Four such notches were created when the original project was completed five years ago.

Rivers naturally meander in a serpentine manner. The corners then generate deeper pools on the outside (as well as alluvial fans on the inside of the bends). These pools are important for fish as they provide cooler spots during warm months and, they provide places for spawning fish to rest.

The alluvial fans on the inside corners create spawning beds.

The original notches were engineered where it looked like the creek was trying to move over.

Unfortunately, two of the notches filled in completely and the remaining two partially filled in after a large amount of gravel was deposited in the main channel in the 2017 and 2018 freshets.

Monitoring will continue to see if these structures are stable over the long term and to determine if they can be used in future designs.



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Partners

The Central Okanagan Land Trust is fortunate to enjoy the financial, operational and/or development support of individuals, companies, local government, and other agencies. These partnerships help build a stronger network of parklands and conservation areas for wildlife – and we are the collective and individual beneficiaries of those healthy natural spaces. We thank all of them for their continuing support of our work and for their faith in our land stewardship practices.



Named Endowment Funds

- Central Okanagan Land Trust Fund
- COLT Johns Family Conservation Area Fund
- COLT Munson Pond Fund
- Bootle Family Fund
- COLT Cynthia Hunter Fund
- Dick & Jean Hall Fund #1
- Hobson Family Fund for COLT
- Bernice Mabee Memorial Fund
- Charles & Kay Pettman Family Fund
- J.W. & M.E. Scott Family Fund
- Trinity Fund
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- Ruth Nuyens Whitson Fund
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