

CENTRAL OKANAGAN
LAND TRUST

Legacy

...a newsletter of the Central Okanagan Land Trust



Restored Munson Pond opened as newest Kelowna park

by Judie Steeves

While the birds and wildlife watched in awe, work party after work party planted native bushes and trees, built viewing platforms, pulled invasive weeds and created a walking path around Munson Pond over the past three years.

An open house at the new 9.8-hectare Kelowna park around the restored pond was held on Earth Day, April 22 by the Central Okanagan Land Trust, which holds a covenant on a portion of the property, and the City of Kelowna, which owns and will maintain the new park.

At that time, it was announced that donations are welcome to an endowment fund with the Central Okanagan Foundation to ensure maintenance of the property as a restored aquatic ecosystem for birds and other fish and wildlife, in perpetuity.

The COLT board of directors passed a resolution to contribute \$5,000 and this was quickly matched by a corporate donation and an additional \$1,000 by the Central Okanagan Naturalists' Club for a current total of \$11,000 with the COF.

In some instances, long-time residents (beavers) of this new park registered their objections to some of the work, by burrowing beneath the bridge foundations and undermining the structure, but, on the whole, the restoration work seems to have met with approval from the inhabitants.

Repairs have been made and the pathway allows human visitors to get a close look into the homes of inhabitants ranging from beavers to birds, from a respectful distance. At two points along the way, viewing platforms have been constructed out over the water, so the aquatic activities of local fish and wildlife can be easily enjoyed and even photographed.

Interpretive signage has also been installed to educate visitors about the natural ecosystem around Okanagan wetlands.

Work was completed this year with the assistance of a \$100,000 federal EcoAction grant, as well as funding from the Okanagan Basin Water Board and others. Volunteers from local schools, Girl Guides and Starbucks employees and their families and many other groups rounded out the vital community support.

President's Report, The Long-Game



It feels good to contribute to a charitable cause, and certainly, contributing to the health and wellness of family and society is a great motivator in most people's lives. I would like to integrate into this sentiment the idea that human's health and welfare depends in part on places where intact, biodiverse and healthy ecosystems can exist. Our psychological health is enhanced by having places where we can hear the sounds of birds, rustling leaves, running

water, and where we can see greenery and wildlife. Our physical wellbeing is enhanced by clean air, food that actually contains nutrients, and clean water. In the long term our economic wellbeing is enhanced by not having to pay for elaborate flood control, pollution abatement, food security and as we are learning, the costs associated with climate change and its associated extreme weather events.

It has been difficult to argue long-term benefits in the face of people's short term needs and wants, but, the effects of habitat loss and environmental degradation have become reality in the short term. For example, refer to the recent report from the World Wildlife Fund, the Pacific Garbage Patch, and the rapid retreat of the glaciers and ice-sheets. People used to say that the world is a big place...and then it wasn't. The Earth is just an isolated blue

dot in the solar system, and as a biosphere it has no ecological connectivity with other biospheres. We are unable to disperse to new habitat, and few of us will be able to do so any time soon.

It's true that some environmental degradation and habitat loss has resulted from large scale industrial activity, but a large amount of it is simply the accrual of small acts. The exhaust from running a single vehicle, mud-bogging in a single wetland, a single housing development covering the soil with concrete and pavement. Each one of these is a drop. Protection of habitat for biodiversity and ecosystem functioning can also occur by the accrual of small drops. It's tempting to view conservation as something that is done by government agencies and distant organizations using an army of hiking-booted, cargo-panted wildlife biologists and birdwatchers, all working to save exotic landscapes and sexy species. This is partially true (and I'm super envious), but conservation can also occur locally with protection of small plots of land and bodies of water. As a biologist, it has been my pleasure over the past few years with COLT to see these small incremental efforts. A piece of property might be set aside as habitat for a species at risk, and in doing so, this allows for a host of other organisms and natural processes to occur that contribute to nutrient cycling, moderation of precipitation events, carbon sequestration, toxin mitigation and the general well-being of the environment. Even if the more charismatic species aren't present, conserving the ecosystem plays a role that contributes to biodiversity and the health and wellness of people and thus is worthy of conserving.

Through COLT, I've been able to meet members of the local community who feel passionate about nature, and to see how good they feel when they do something that protects the environment and biodiversity. So, why not be a little hedonistic? Ask us how you can contribute and you can feel good too.

Sincerely,

Laura Hooker
President

Executive Director Report



Welcome to a brand new newsletter from COLT - an opportunity to bring everyone up to date on all the great partnerships that have helped us preserve wildlife habitat and improve the region's environment. From Munson Pond and the Mission Creek Restoration Initiative (MCRI) to the Kokanee Festival and the recent BC Nature Conference, COLT Board members and volunteers have been at the table.

After three years of work, the Munson Pond project has come to an end with the installation of eight interpretive signs that illuminate the site's aquatic ecology, flora, fauna, and history. Placed on the viewing platforms, the text and photos will help everyone understand this important pond.

Just downstream on Mission Creek, the MCRI is heading into its final year of adaptive management. Over the next few years we will be monitoring the work that has been done and planning for new

Mission Creek improvement sites in the future.

Perhaps one of the most exciting developments over the past few months is the establishment of the new Munson Pond Endowment Fund. The work COLT and its partners need to do at the pond in the future will require funding, and the Board has made a leadership statement by establishing this new fund.

Finally, the COLT Board is in the midst of establishing a new Conservation Covenant with the RDCO on the new parkland on Black Mountain. In the future, COLT hopes to work closely with the Friends of Black Mountain on important habitat restoration work, site interpretation, and other valuable environment work.

Please think about helping us with this valuable work by visiting our website at www.coltrust.ca...and perhaps even more important - get outside and walk the parks and greenways in the Central Okanagan. You might also like to help with a donation to the new Munson Pond Endowment Fund.

Thank you for your help.

Wayne Wilson
Executive Director

COLT supports latest parkland purchase

by Judie Steeves



Photo — Judie Steeves

It's steeped in history, has panoramic views out over Okanagan Lake and valley, and it includes a variety of ecosystems that are representative of those in the surrounding valley.

Black Mountain/sntsk'il'nten Regional Park is the latest gem imbedded in this region's tiara of parkland with 127 hectares added late last year, with a little help from the Central Okanagan Land Trust, as well as the federal Habitat Stewardship program.

In total, the new park is 643 hectares of grassland, Ponderosa pine forest, ponds, wetlands, cliffs and gullies—the largest park in the Central Okanagan. The Okanagan Nsyilxcin name for the new park, which will be co-managed with Westbank First Nation, translates to 'the place where arrowheads/flint rock is found' and it's a site that has been a gathering place for thousands of years, as well as being a collection site for a wide variety of plants and medicines.

The area has also historically been used as a forest fire lookout, a ski hill and for grazing cattle.

The vision in the park management plan is for not only recreational hiking trails to be created in the new park, but also interpretive signage, ecological restoration and conservation of sensitive ecosystems.

It is currently not open to the public.

Last fall, at an announcement of the additional purchase of adjoining lands, Jordan Coble of the WFN talked about remembering we're not always in charge where Mother Nature is concerned and how important it is that we conserve natural lands for future generations.

He called it a "co-responsibility" rather than "co-management" agreement between the regional district and the WFN to manage the new parkland.

He gave thanks for the cooperation of everyone in conserving the land and said it is a very important spot for his people.

A COLT covenant on the land is currently being finalized.

New Board Members

Gord Savage

(Eng Technologist – Ret'd)

Gordon has been a Kelowna resident since the mid 1960's. He graduated from Kelowna Secondary School before going on to receive a Diploma in Civil Engineering Technology at BCIT. He worked for much of his career for the civil engineering firm, Reid Crowther before starting his own company, CTQ Consultants.

Gord is a dedicated Rotarian and past President of the Rotary Club of Kelowna. Gord and his wife, Maureen, are also active in their pursuits of outdoor recreation including paddling, hiking, cycling and skiing. It is these activities that have given them a strong appreciation and a keen interest in our environment and the sustainability of our fragile habitats and at risk species.



Continues...



Our Mission

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

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Don Knox - Director
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Dorothy Mills - Director
Angela Corman - Director
Hugh Westheuser - Director
Eve Wegscheidler - Director

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Ex Officio – Representative, Regional District Central Okanagan

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... New board members Continued from page 3



Dorothy Mills

(CPA, CGA)

Dorothy has lived in Kelowna since the 1970s and is an accountant with a CPA, CGA designation. She has been a Director of the Friends of Mission Creek since 1996, and more recently joined the Board of the Kelowna General Hospital Foundation. Dorothy is avid about the outdoors and enjoys hiking, horseback riding, skiing, and walking her dog.



Angela Cormano

(BSc, RPF, RPBio)

Angela studied forest science at UBC and has worked as an environmental consultant primarily on fisheries, soils and terrestrial ecology projects but also other unique projects such as fire threat assessments and contaminated sites reviews. As a professional forester and biologist, she has been fortunate to work throughout BC and into

Alberta and the Yukon. She currently works in the utility sector and is looking for opportunities to apply her interest in the natural environment outside of work. Angela volunteered on the RDCO Environmental Advisory Commission for 6 years and appreciates the opportunity to participate with COLT in its efforts.

BATS - Johns Family Nature Conservancy Regional Park
by Hugh Westheuser

Last summer, the Central Okanagan Land Trust (COLT) had a small area of the Johns Family Nature Conservancy Regional Park surveyed for bats—with surprising results. The survey, conducted over seven consecutive days, obtained roughly



1,000 high-frequency bat calls from three different locations and identified 13 bat species. Only 15 bat species are known to inhabit B.C. Some bats use rock crevices for roosting or as a maternity ward during the summer, while other bats use trees or buildings. This park has an abundance of this type of habitat. Additionally, it is surrounded by Crown lands, including nearby Okanagan Mountain Provincial Park—providing even more favourable bat habitat nearby. With the apparent numbers and variety of bat species, further

investigations were required, particularly if either the roosting sites or maternity wards were in sites which could be disturbed by people visiting the park.

With that in mind, the COLT board authorized the purchase of two stationary Bat Acoustical Recorders, and two hand-held instruments that are used with mobile telephones. They can be used by COLT directors or other volunteers, rather than contracting professional biologists.

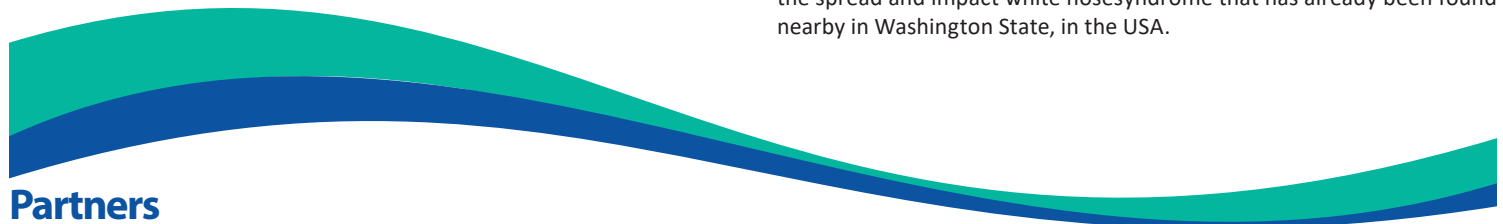
The instruments were received in mid-April this year, and put to use immediately. They have been regularly moved to different locations within the park—wherever it was felt bats might be found. Digital data collected from the recorders will be analyzed in the next few months. The recorders are currently still in the park and will be until the bats have disappeared for winter, either in hibernation or migration.

The nearby forest fire this summer and thick smoke hampered the investigation somewhat, but the Stationary Recorders were only removed when the Goode's Creek wildfire threatened the park.

This investigation will continue next year, monitoring in the same locations on the same dates, for comparison purposes.

This information establishes a base-line for various species and ensures we manage the park in accordance with the donor's wishes that it remain natural wildlife habitat and in accordance with the Management Plan.

We share the data with the Regional District of Central Okanagan and, in the case of bats, with provincial biologists who are trying to understand the spread and impact white nosed syndrome that has already been found nearby in Washington State, in the USA.



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

- J. W. & M. E. Scott Family Fund
- J. W. Bootle Family Fund
- Charles Pettman Memorial Fund
- Bernice Mabee Memorial Fund
- Harvey & Ruth Whitson Fund
- Dick & Jean Hall Fund
- Central Okanagan Land Trust – Open Fund
- Johns Family Endowment Fund
- Hobson Family Endowment Fund
- Cynthia Ellis Endowment Fund
- Munson Pond Endowment Fund