



For Immediate Release

Land in Highlands Acquired for Conservation

Protected Land Buffers Thetis Lake Regional Park

February 26, 2021 Victoria, BC

Habitat Acquisition Trust (HAT) today announced that it has acquired a 23-hectare property adjacent to Thetis Lake Regional Park for permanent conservation. The land had been owned by Anne and Jim Ginns for 50 years prior to being secured by HAT. The Ginns always intended for the land to be permanently protected, and this step for them represents the realization of a long-term goal. To make this conservation possible, they donated a significant portion of the value of the property to HAT.

For HAT, this parcel represents an opportunity to secure a diverse landscape within the Coastal Douglas fir moist maritime biogeoclimatic zone. The land primarily represents a diverse maturing second growth Coastal Douglas fir forest ranging from the drier upland to moist, rich cedar lowlands. The undulating landscape is interspersed with rocky outcrops that support pockets of open Garry Oak and arbutus ecosystems. A small complex of permanent and seasonal shrub wetlands provide diverse habitats and water sources for a variety of species that make this area home. This combination of ecosystems in the regenerating second growth forest along with the young trees left when it was logged in the 1950s creates a structurally diverse landscape that is host to a variety of rare and representative birds, mammals, amphibians, and plants. The property provides habitat for species listed under Canada's *Species at Risk Act* (SARA), including Coastal Western Screech-Owl (Threatened), Olive-sided Flycatcher (Threatened), and Sharp tailed snake (Endangered). Placing this ecologically important property into conservation protects it from future human threats like development and subdivision.

The Ginns property is located within the District of Highlands within a short drive of the larger urban center of Victoria, BC. The exact location of the parcel will not be announced until further plans and arrangements can be made to limit impacts to the ecosystem that may result from increased public access.

This project was made possible by the Government of Canada through the Natural Heritage Conservation Program, part of Canada's Nature Fund, as well as the generosity of Anne and Jim Ginns.

QUOTES:

“By working with partners like Habitat Acquisition Trust, we are protecting our iconic natural environment here in British Columbia,” said Jonathan Wilkinson, Canada’s Minister of Environment and Climate Change. “Together, and with the support of programs like the Canada Nature Fund’s Natural Heritage Conservation Program, we are making progress toward our goal of conserving a quarter of Canada’s land by 2025.”
– *The Honourable Jonathan Wilkinson, Minister of Environment and Climate Change*

“The Coastal Douglas-fir ecosystem is one of the most rare in Canada,” said the Nature Conservancy of Canada’s BC Regional Vice President Nancy Newhouse. “Conserving land adjacent to existing parks and protected areas is an effective way to help ensure the longevity of this endangered habitat.”

“We are very grateful for the generous contribution of the Ginns, who acquired this property 50 years ago with the goal of protecting its sensitive ecological features for the long-term,” said Katie Blake, Executive Director of Habitat Acquisition Trust.

“It would have been difficult for us to save the Highlands forest in perpetuity without mentoring from the capable staff at HAT. We trust our gift will inspire other people to cherish and protect nature,” say Anne and Jim Ginns.

FACTS:

- The acquired parcel is adjacent to the 922-ha Thetis Lake Regional Park.
- The Coastal Douglas-fir ecological zone is the smallest and rarest of the ecological zones in BC, and contains the highest diversity of plant species in BC. The Coastal Douglas-fir zone contains the well-known Garry Oak Ecosystems, of which less than 5% occurs in a near-natural condition.

ABOUT:

The Government of Canada’s Natural Heritage Conservation Program (NHCP) is a unique public-private partnership to support new protected and conserved areas by securing private lands and private interests in lands. The program is managed by the Nature Conservancy of Canada (NCC). Federal funds invested in the program are matched with contributions raised by NCC and its partners, Ducks Unlimited Canada and the country’s land trust community.

Habitat Acquisition Trust (HAT) is a regional land trust, founded in 1996, that works to conserve natural areas on southern Vancouver Island and the Gulf Islands through protection, collaboration, stewardship and education.

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