



HAT Chat

Habitat Acquisition Trust

One Piece

‘Oh we see everything out here. I was sitting at the dining room table, very early one morning, and looked outside to find two cougars mating on my porch,’ says Ken Van.

These wildlife sightings are a common occurrence for Ken and his wife, Patti Homer, who live in Sooke on land almost completely untouched by outside hands. It takes a drive up the picturesque Phillips road, past the hulking Sunriver Estates developments, to reach them. Their property has no resemblance to development downstream, with just a small main house, workshop, and cabin for their son.

Made out of recycled cedar, their home seems to tuck quietly into the woods that surround it. It sits at an elevation of 60m, while the highest point on the property reaches 140m. Their small paradise boasts an elaborate veggie garden, beautiful flowers, and a brick oven used to bake bread and pizza, amongst other things.

Ken and Patti acquired the property through a good friend of theirs 16 years ago; it was never on the market. They only expected to get a couple acres, but ended up with just under 40.

‘We used to hike the property before it was ours, and [our friend] knew we really appreciated it. He didn’t want it to be sold to developers,’ says Van.

Ken and Patti talked about how to protect their land for a number of years. ‘Phillips road is five km long and used to look like our property 10 years ago, all trees and winding country road. You saw what it looks like now—all wiped out. 715 homes are planned for when construction is complete, and more are discussed every day. We saw what was coming and knew we needed outside help and formal protection on the land. This wasn’t something we could do by ourselves,’ says Van.

After beginning discussions with TLC, Ken and Patti decided to go with a multi-party conservation covenant for their land, and Habitat Acquisition Trust (HAT) was asked to partner as a co-covenant holder. Usually conservation covenants

restrict use and development to prevent damage to natural areas. Every covenant is tailored to the unique character of the land and the conservation goals of its owners.

‘HAT was very generous with their time and knowledge,’ says Homer. ‘They brought people out from the provincial government who confirmed that this land was worth protecting.’

TLC and HAT worked together to word the covenant, ensuring that the land can never be disturbed.

Ken and Patti knew from the outset that they had a unique piece of land; TLC, HAT, and the provincial government provided them with the background knowledge to understand exactly why it is unique. Their land is an eco-tone; a transition area between two different ecosystems bordering each other—in this case where the west coast Western hemlock ecoregion meets the east coast Douglas fir ecoregion. Characteristics of the Western hemlock include shady canopies and moist soils, while Douglas fir is more open and has shallow, dry soils. This enables numerous flora and fauna to reside on the Van/Homer land.

‘Absolutely every variety of bird—huge woodpeckers, rough skinned newts walk up and down the garden path when it’s wet, bears go through here, the western slimy salamander... There is a habitat for every creature,’ says Homer.

Not to mention all the greenery, with Arbutus and Gary oak trees, English holly and Oceanspray shrubs, and chocolate lilies, to name a few.

As for the future, Homer is absolute that their land will remain as it is forever. ‘When we are finished with the property—or finished period—the property will end up with a conservancy organization. We can’t save the whole world, but we can contribute with this one piece.’

Ken Van and Patti Homer, photo by Jina Moussau



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Frank Hobbs School Garden

Barb Bundon & Barb Latham, parents of students at Frank Hobbs

Habitat Acquisition Trust (HAT) generously donated more than 40 native plants to Frank Hobbs School garden. And so began a wonderful experience for our club members, and other children who joined us. First, Todd and Laurie came to talk to the children about the importance of using native plants in our gardens. They explained how native plants bring back insects and birds to an area. Frank Hobbs students also learned how mulch protects plants from the winter cold, supplies nutrients to the soil, and minimizes the amount of watering required. Then, we had planting day when HAT brought mulch too; the children moved about five yards of mulch into the existing garden beds. The children planted both baby shrubs and groundcovers. Five plants which HAT selected for the native garden were sword ferns, Indian plum, red flowering currant, ocean spray, and evergreen huckleberry. The children were also very

enthusiastic about the marvelous activities and games Laurie introduced throughout the planting day. By adding these activities, she successfully demonstrated that natural spaces are also great play spaces. The Frank Hobbs community would like to thank HAT for the wonderful natural day out of doors. Club members, children and adults alike, look forward to working on more projects with our new plants.

On Friday March 26th, Garry Oakley came to surprise all the children at Frank Hobbs Elementary. Garry led the children in boisterously shouting the rhyme "If you love me, mulch a tree." The children understood the message! Garry hopes to inspire the children to continue to learn enthusiastically about the importance of protecting their native garden at Frank Hobbs.



In Remembrance: Connie Hawley

A member of the Victoria Natural History Society (VNHS) for many years, Constance (Connie) Hawley was a true lover of nature. If she wasn't knee deep in her garden, she could be found on birding trips, studying botany, or walking through Beacon Hill Park.

Connie was born and raised in Winnipeg, and spent her summers at her family's cottage in Victoria Beach, Manitoba. She completed her BSW at the University of British Columbia after moving to BC in the early sixties. Her career in social work took her from New Westminster to Toronto, and she spent ample time on the west coast coordinating community health clinics. Connie was the founding executive director with the BC Council of the Family in her last eight years of civil service.

In her retirement, Connie took biology classes at the University of Victoria, travelled, and took up water colour painting. Friend and fellow VNHS member Lyndis Davis recalls that Connie rarely shared her paintings with others, 'I think she painted mainly for herself.'

VNHS member Claudia Copley recalls spending time with Connie in her garden, ranting about house sparrows, 'a constant plague,' and discussing plants and veggies. Connie motivated Copley to adjust her own veggie garden, 'It was her raised vegetable beds that inspired us to build something similar—wide and high

enough so you can comfortably sit down on them while you worked.'

'She was a lovely, unassuming and gracious woman who embraced the naturalist world when she settled in Victoria,' says Bruce Whittington, also a VNHS member and founder of Habitat Acquisition Trust (HAT). Connie left a bequest to HAT's Endowment Fund with the Victoria Foundation. Whittington speculates that Connie's interest in HAT was a result of the involvement of other VNHS members. 'She was very loyal I think, and gave her support to an organization she felt connected to,' says Whittington.

Connie passed away at her home in Victoria on June 23rd, 2009. Her gift to HAT's Endowment Fund will help HAT protect ecologically sensitive lands in perpetuity. "Connie's legacy will help HAT and other environmental groups conserve the natural environments she cared so much about" says Adam Taylor, HAT's Executive Director. "We are touched and grateful for her consideration."

However you came to know her, Connie left a strong impression. 'I always admired her—she was so independent and resilient,' says Copley. 'She had a push mower long before anyone talked of climate change, even though it was too heavy for her to easily push!'

-Jina Mousseau, Habitat Acquisition Trust

Conservation Connection 2010

Habitat Acquisition Trust is proud to host the 10th annual Conservation Connection on Friday, September 17th at Royal Roads University. It's your opportunity to connect with conservation leaders in our community, including Elizabeth May, leader of the Green Party of Canada; Ken Cossey, Tsawout Lands Manager; local MPs and MLAs, many other presenters, and representatives from local conservation organizations and governments. It's a great way to build partnerships and find out who else is taking action in your community.

This full day forum is organized by Habitat Acquisition Trust and sponsored by Continuing Studies department of Royal Roads University. There will be mix of topical, facilitated discussions, and capacity-building workshops. This year will include sessions on fundraising and planned giving, land use planning on First Nations land, linking academic research with conservation initiatives, an Open Space session, and "big picture" politics and local conservation with regional MPs and MLAs.

We invite anyone who is interested in conservation issues in our region to attend. To register, visit the Royal Roads University website, www.royalroads.ca.

HAT Events Summer & Fall 2010

Join us at any of these events this summer. Register through the HAT office for volunteer events, and be sure to catch up with us at any public events.

July 25th - *Birding at Island View Beach*. A morning low tide during the full moon attracts feeding shorebirds, and Island View Beach is one of the best places to see them. Visit the bird of prey demonstration and watch the ScallyWags Dog Agility Group stars run challenge courses (two show times: 12:30pm & 1:30pm).

August 25th - *Super Dog Day at Island View Beach*. The dogs days of summer are super on the beach with your pet! See the amazing Wonder Dogs perform stunts at Island View Beach (two show times: 12:30pm & 1:30pm). Take the dunes tour with biologists and other dog lovers to learn about the wild side of the seaside.

September 17th - *Conservation Connection Forum at Royal Roads University*.

October 2nd - *Oak Haven Weed Whack*. Join us at Oak Haven Park in Central Saanich as we continue the struggle to keep invasive species from overwhelming this Garry oak woodland. Call the HAT Office at 250 995-2428 to register.

Conservation Connection 2010



10 Years of Conservation Partnerships



September 17th at Royal Roads University
\$40 (\$30 for non-profit staff, volunteers and students)



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Harbourview photo by Jina Mousseau

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