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# HAT Chat

The Newsletter of Habitat Acquisition Trust

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Fall 2001

Issue 5

## Good Neighbours Can Enhance Protected Habitats

*There are over 130 species at risk within the Capital Regional District -  
and they're running out of places to live.*

The Capital Regional District (CRD) is blessed with a rich diversity of habitats, and we are fortunate that the amount of protected space is increasing annually. But it has long been recognized that habitats which are "protected" are still vulnerable to many threats. The viability of these protected areas is directly proportional to their sizes. Smaller parcels become "islands" in a sea of agriculture, development, or resource extraction.

In the CRD, the cost of expanding existing protected areas and greenspaces is prohibitive. Because there is an unusually high percentage of privately-owned land, and tremendous development pressure, the promotion of voluntary land stewardship is a vital and cost-effective method of protecting these natural resources. Habitat protection can be enhanced by fostering good land stewardship practices on privately owned land which is adjacent to protected areas. By encouraging property owners to be "Good Neighbours" to these protected areas, the integrity of those habitats will be strengthened.

HAT has begun work on Phase One of its Good Neighbours project, a major habitat enhancement initiative in the CRD. In partnership with provincial, regional, and municipal parks authorities, community conservation organizations ("Friends-of" groups), other land trusts in the region, and the public, HAT will develop a prioritized list of sensitive areas (protected and otherwise) which most require the protection of buffers around their perimeters. HAT has hired a full time staff person and a half time supervisor for the four month duration of this phase of the project. The project is partially funded by the BC E-Team Program, and the Provincial Capital Commission.



*Mature Garry Oak ecosystems are rare, and will benefit from the Good Neighbours project.*

With the groundwork having been laid this fall, Phase Two of the project can proceed, which will run from January through December 2002. This will involve development of a coordinated landowner contact program, using the prioritized list developed in Phase One.

*(see "Good Neighbours", page 3 )*

## President's Message

### Putting Things into Perspective

Sometimes I need to leave town to gain perspective. I spent the first half of October taking in southern Ontario's fall colours, and the Annual Meeting of the Society for Ecological Restoration in Niagara Falls, and the "Science and Old-Growth Forests" conference in Sault Ste. Marie.

At the Society for Ecological Restoration meetings, I was reminded how daunting (and sometimes unrewarding) restoration efforts can be. Restoration is sometimes critical, as many HAT members appreciate. Check out the good work done so far on the Ayum Creek estuary and lower reaches by our friends from the Society for the Protection of Ayum Creek. Still, one of the main messages from the meeting - and from the field of ecological restoration in general - is that it's always better to save ecosystems before they're so degraded as to require major restoration.

In many areas of southern Ontario, all that's left is ecosystems requiring restoration. The natural, undisturbed ecosystems - grasslands, savannahs, old-growth forests - have been 'managed' for decades or centuries. This creates the additional problem of not having any 'blueprints' to guide restorationists. What do you restore *to*? What is your target?

This theme emerged at Sault Ste. Marie as well, and for similar reasons. The Carolinian forests of southern Ontario are among Canada's most endangered. At this conference on old-growth forests, there were several papers presented debating what the original composition of these forests was. Were they white-pine-dominated, or were they hardwood-dominated? A pretty fundamental conservation question. Evidence was presented from early paintings of the area, and from the journals of the earliest settlers.

I mentioned that the Carolinian forests of southern Ontario are among Canada's most endangered. The only other contenders for this 'honour' are BC's coastal rainshadow forests. These ecosystems - Douglas-fir forests and Garry oak meadows - are the Habitats that the Habitat Acquisition Trust was established to protect.

We're facing some of the same problems that conservationists in southern Ontario face. Southern Vancouver Island and the Gulf Islands were among the first areas settled in B.C. by pioneers. The area has been logged, and farmed, and lived in, for longer than most areas of our province. Less than 1% of B.C. is urban and agricultural; but more than 35% of our area is. And yet, we still have a few good examples of our old-growth forests, and our oak savannahs. We still have the blueprints. And we have the opportunity to save some of them. We certainly won't have these opportunities in a decade - urban expansion will eat up all unprotected green space around Victoria in that time.

There are times when the pace of habitat protection and acquisition around the Capital Regional District seems glacially slow. My travels reminded me about what we have, what we've accomplished, and what we stand to lose.

It's good to be home!

*Andy MacKinnon, President*

## **Good Neighbours: Phase Two**

*(continued from Page 1)*

HAT will hire two Landowner Contact Interns, who will be responsible for development and implementation of a landowner contact program. HAT will do some of this work directly, and train other community groups who wish to participate. The intention of the landowner contact program is to educate property owners about the significance of the sensitive areas adjacent to their properties, and ways in which they can reduce their impacts on these areas. Landowner Contact Interns will provide resource materials and support as requested and encourage willing property owners to consider voluntary stewardship agreements, and conservation covenants.

The Good Neighbours project has received enthusiastic support already, but we are especially excited about HAT's recent partnership with the Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society. CPAWS is interested in incorporating its Parkwatch program into the Good Neighbours project, and in monitoring the project as a model to be implemented in the Greater Vancouver Regional District (which is outside HAT's mandate area).

## **HAT Joins the United Community Services Coop**

In April HAT became a member of the United Community Services Coop. The UCS Coop acts as the business vehicle and voice for British Columbia's non-profit community service organizations. Through the USC Coop, HAT will be able to access excellent rates for services and products - further ensuring that donations go to protecting habitats and not to office costs. HAT Executive Director Bruce Whittington was elected to the board of directors of the UCS Coop at the Annual General Meeting October 23. He will be representing small non-profit organizations.

## **HAT Assisted by Canadian Centre for Philanthropy**

This year, HAT joined the Canadian Centre for Philanthropy through its National Access Bursary Program, which provides bursaries for small charitable organizations to become members of the Canadian Centre for Philanthropy for one year. This membership will assist HAT to better understand Canada's charitable sector, and the complex and ever-changing issues and responsibilities facing the voluntary sector.

## **When Moving Up in the World Means Moving Down**

In order to accommodate a growing staff and our many volunteers, HAT has moved to a larger office. We are now in Suite 316 (still in the Central Building, 620 View St.).

But we still stick to the odd numbered floors because they house the women's washrooms (men's are on even numbered floors).

. . . . Sorry Bruce!

## **What a Difference a Donation Makes**

A special thanks to James Ramsey, who donated his computer to us after reading our pleas in the last HAT Chat. We still need another Pentium quality computer, so if you or your workplace is upgrading, please consider donating the old system to us. HAT also needs a colour printer and some staff-kindly office chairs. We would be pleased to issue a tax receipt for the market value of any equipment donation.

Our new office is equipped with a sink and a microwave, but a fridge (bar-sized or even smaller) would make a big difference for the staff and board. If you have one you can part with, please let us know.

## **ConservationConnection.bc.ca**

In January , HAT began the development of a website called Conservation Connection, to foster partnerships and communication among the conservation and stewardship organizations in the Capital Region.

The website features profiles of over 90 such organizations in the CRD. Each profile highlights current and completed projects, mandates, fundraising initiatives, contact information, and volunteer needs. The response has been overwhelmingly positive, not only from the conservation community, but also from volunteers, the public, and government agencies using the site. HAT has made this technology available to other non-profits and we have already supplied the webcoding files to Youth for Global Change, and Stewardship Canada. Hard copies of the profiles have been sent to municipal councillors, public libraries, and senior secondary schools to be used as a resource. So now people can access the information whether they are “wired” or not.

You can check out the website at [www.conservationconnection.bc.ca](http://www.conservationconnection.bc.ca). Conservation organizations in the CRD are still welcome to join the site. Just go to the site and follow the prompts for new groups.

## **Guiding the Conservation Connection**

After HAT’s successful Connecting for Conservation forum in April, the Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society (CPAWS) approached us to co-host meetings to follow up on ideas generated in the forum round table discussions. On June 20 at Swan Lake Nature House, over 30 people from various conservation and stewardship organizations gathered to identify some of the needs of organizations in the area, and brainstormed on the function of a Steering Committee. The group proposed the addition of a Calendar of Events to the Website.

On August 9, we met again at Swan Lake, and began the move from the planning phase to the action phase. Participants decided to keep the name Conservation Connection for the steering committee, which will include HAT executive director Bruce Whittington. Different groups will host future meetings, with the host group organizing a short presentation on a topic of interest to the members. This format will help to disperse meeting costs, and members will learn about different groups in the CRD. A host group for a December meeting is needed, so if your group would like to host the meeting, please call the HAT office at 995-2428.

## **HAT People**

HAT is very pleased to announce the appointment of Claudia Copley to the position of Program Coordinator. Claudia has a strong background in biology, and in natural history interpretation, in both the private and non-profit sectors. A strong HAT supporter since its founding, Claudia replaces Clare Rumball, who continues to be involved with the non-profit sector in her new position with the provincial government.

Krista Brownell, completing a Biology degree at UVic, has been hired under the E-Team program, as a Landowner Contact Intern on HAT’s Good Neighbours project. Meagan Christie has completed her eight month UVic coop term at HAT, but she will not go away. She has returned to school, but continues with HAT part-time, to finish up some of her work at Tod Creek, and to supervise the Good Neighbours project.

A paid volunteer is an oxymoron perhaps, but HAT has got one nonetheless. Thanks to the Youth Community Action Program, Laura Christie will work 100 volunteer hours for HAT, in exchange for tuition credit. A Geography student at UVic, Laura has helped build and place nestboxes in the Tod Creek Watershed , and has been working on the Good Neighbours Project.

## HAT Fundraising

*Did You Know? You can donate to HAT easily by using a non-profit website called [CanadaHelps.org](http://CanadaHelps.org)*



### Goldstream Art Show a Celebration of Nature

The doors have closed on the 2001 “Nature of Island Artists” show and sale of nature art. The biennial show, which began 1988, entertained over 10,000 visitors this year.



*Over 10,000 visitors took in the seventh “Nature of Island Artist” show since 1988.*

Over 100 artists participated in the show, in media ranging from oils to tapestry to sculpture and weaving. But through it all ran the theme of how special our natural areas are. The \$8,700 profit from the show will support the Eagle Extravaganza programs at Goldstream, and HAT’s projects. A portion will be committed to the fund to purchase Laughlin Lake.

HAT is honoured to be a part of an event which combines artistic excellence with an abiding community spirit. We are grateful to Arenaria Research and Interpretation (and particularly Darren and Claudia Copley), BC Parks, the many volunteers of the Victoria Natural History Society, and of course the artists themselves.

### The Capers Caper

On June 20, Capers Victoria invited HAT to participate in its 5% day. HAT received 5% of the net proceeds from sales that day, and had an in-store display set up all day to increase awareness about our initiatives. HAT values its partnerships with local businesses like Capers. Over \$600 was raised, and we are grateful for the opportunity to participate.

### Costa Rica Trip Cancelled

Due to current uncertainties around air travel, the HAT’s Off birding trip to Costa Rica has been postponed. We are instead considering a trip within Canada this Spring. HAT director Marilyn Lambert has often talked of taking a group to the gorgeous grasslands of southern Alberta - watch the next HAT Chat for more information.

### Endowment Fund Grows

HAT is delighted to welcome two new Sustaining Members. Loucas Raptis is well known for his support of HAT through his “Freshwater Fish of Vancouver Island” project. Ann Nightingale has been a strong HAT supporter, and is also active in the Rocky Point Bird Observatory, and the Victoria Natural History Society.

Sustaining memberships carry a one-time cost of \$1000, which is tax-receiptable. The HAT board has established a policy of depositing Sustaining Membership donations into the Habitat Acquisition Trust Endowment Fund with The Victoria Foundation. For more information about becoming a Sustaining Member, please call us at the HAT office.

## HAT Projects

### Tod Creek Watershed Project

HAT's co-op student from UVic, Meagan Christie, has spent many days this summer roaming the Tod Creek watershed, visiting watershed residents, and putting up nestboxes for birds.

Meagan's visits are an opportunity to note the importance of their properties to the health of the watershed, and also to learn more about the wildlife and ecosystems of the watershed from the people who know them best.

Karen Hurley, who is under contract to HAT, has been busy writing voluntary stewardship agreements for Environmental Stewards in the watershed. These flexible agreements allow residents to make a commitment to continue their environmentally responsible care of the land and aquatic ecosystems. HAT makes a commitment to provide the residents with information and support. As sometimes happens, some of these stewards are now considering strengthening the protection of their natural areas using conservation covenants.

The residents of the watershed are very committed to protecting their home place, and have formed a local conservation group called the Friends of Tod Creek. HAT will continue to work with the Friends in the fall, with a series of workshops and presentations at the Prospect Lake Community Hall, including a presentation on local butterflies and moths by Jeremy Tatum.



*Meagan Christie works from a boat in Tod Inlet to place a Purple Martin nestbox on a piling*

### Laughlin Lake Closer to Permanent Protection

The campaign to purchase Laughlin Lake on Galiano Island crested the hill this fall, as we passed the halfway point in the fundraising drive. The Galiano Conservancy Association held a lamb barbecue which raised over \$2,000. HAT has received grants of \$3,000 from The Barraclough Foundation of Victoria and \$5,000 from the Kaatza Foundation in Vancouver for the purchase. Part of the proceeds of the Goldstream Art Show will also support the project.

The scientific case for protecting Laughlin Lake continues to build. Islanders recently discovered another provincially blue-listed species, a Western Painted Turtle, on the property.

### Put Laughlin Lake Under Your Christmas Tree in 2001

The Christmas season is a time to give special greetings to the special people in our lives. It's a time to create memories that last, and there may be no better way to do this than by creating a conservation legacy. We at HAT are working to make Laughlin Lake a part of that legacy.

You can give the gift of any amount over \$20.00, which will ensure permanent protection for the largest lake on Galiano Island. Your donation is described in an attractive full colour gift card, with information about Laughlin Lake. For information, please contact us at the HAT office.

## **New Protected Areas in the Capital Region**

Lots of new parkland has been acquired in HAT's area-of-interest since the last HAT CHAT. The provincial government, along with the Capital Regional District and others, spent more than \$15 million to buy 650 hectares of Saltspring Island for parkland; The Nature Trust of B.C. spent \$3.97 million to purchase another 282 hectares on Saltspring; CRD Parks spent \$1.78 million to secure 8 hectares of Garry oak woodland immediately adjacent to Mill Hill Park; and Islands Trust Fund, with assistance from Environment Canada and The Land Conservancy of B.C., spent \$250,000 for 12 hectares of sensitive habitat overlooking Trincomali Channel off southwest Galiano Island (HAT will co-hold the conservation covenant on this property, and is participating in the development of a management plan).

It's often difficult to keep track of who's doing what in our area. Ecosystems on southern Vancouver Island and the Gulf Islands are important nationally, provincially and regionally, and it's not surprising that national (Nature Conservancy of Canada), provincial (The Nature Trust of B.C. and The Land Conservancy of B.C.), and regional (HAT, Islands Trust Fund) conservation groups are active here. HAT continues to work on projects with all of these organizations.

What's important, in the end, is that habitat is conserved. And it's a combination of national, provincial and regional fund-raising that made it possible to buy more than \$20 million of parkland in our area over the last six months. Congratulations to all involved!

### **An Important Message About HAT's Annual General Meeting**

**December 12, 2001, at 7:30 p.m. Swan Lake Nature Sanctuary, 3873 Swan Lake Road**

Refreshments will be served

Please join us for HAT's AGM! It's an opportunity to celebrate our successes of the past year, but we also conduct some important matters of business, including the election of HAT Directors. This year the Board is also presenting two resolutions which the membership will be asked to vote on. The proposed resolutions are:

1. That HAT request from Canada Customs and Revenue Agency a redesignation of its charitable status from "public foundation" to "registered charity". This reflects the nature of HAT's current activities, and aligns HAT with the status of other land trusts.
2. That HAT seek approval to change its legal name from VNHS Habitat Acquisition Trust Foundation to one of "Habitat Acquisition Trust", "Habitat Acquisition Trust Society", or "HAT Habitat Acquisition Trust". Although HAT may legally continue to use its name, even if it ceases legally to be a foundation, the Board felt that this could be confusing to members, donors, and funders. In addition, while HAT maintains a close working relationship with its founder, the Victoria Natural History Society, HAT is now a fully independent society, and the Board feels it is more appropriate to drop the "VNHS" from its legal name. A name change would necessitate an amendment to HAT's Constitution, which requires membership approval.

Only HAT members may vote at an AGM; memberships will be sold at the Meeting.



## Habitat Acquisition Trust

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HAT does not release its mailing list to any other organizations.*

## Thank you to All HAT's Supporters

**The following organizations have provided generous support to HAT in 2001:**

Arenaria Research and Interpretation  
Art & Soul Frame and Gallery  
Bagel Street Cafe  
Barraclough Foundation  
BC Environmental Youth Team  
BC Gaming Commission  
Blue Crab Bar and Grill  
The Butchart Gardens  
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