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# HAT Chat

The Newsletter of Habitat Acquisition Trust

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Fall 2002

Issue 8

## The Laughlin Lake “List” Lengthens

During recent field surveys at Laughlin Lake on Galiano Island, Bruce and I found two more species which are on the province's "Blue List" of vulnerable species and call the lake “home”. Two dragonflies, the Blue Dasher (*Pachydiplax longipennis*) and the Western Pondhawk (*Erythemis collocata*), are not in danger of extinction, but in British Columbia their long-term survival depends on the protection of habitats like Laughlin Lake. Andrew Harcombe, a HAT director and Director of the Province's Conservation Data Centre (CDC), explains that Blue-listed species are tracked by the CDC because they are especially vulnerable to human activity, and at risk of becoming more threatened.

We talked to Rob Cannings, Curator of Entomology at the Royal BC Museum, and author of a new dragonfly fieldguide, about our discoveries and he indicated that both species live in small, scattered populations around ponds or lakeside marshes in the lowlands of the extreme south coast



of British Columbia and at one spot near Osoyoos in the Interior. Rob added, “Their habitats are among the first to disappear during the development of housing, industry and roads.”

We also found a healthy population of another Blue-listed species, the Red-legged Frog, and a couple of representatives of our coastal population of Great Blue Herons, also blue-listed. No sign of the Western Painted Turtles that have been reported there previously. Their population on the island is suspicious; they may not have occurred in these regions historically. But if we really wanted to delve into the history books with regard to the reptiles, then we'd have to acknowledge the pages that have already been torn out of this ecosystem. The coastal population of Gopher Snake, *Pituophis catenifer catenifer*, has not been seen on Galiano since the 1800's and is on an even more significant list: our provincial red-list. Another “special” reptile is the Sharp-tailed

Snake, *Contia tenuis*. It's in the same club as the gopher snake although records of it are more numerous and recent.

It was a rare opportunity to get out of the office for the two of us but I initially balked at the idea of spending an entire workday doing the sort of things I do in my free time. Go birding?! Look for reptiles and amphibians?! Identify dragonflies and other insects?! Botanize?! It just felt wrong somehow! Of course, these are exactly the sorts of inventories that are required in order to lend credibility to the importance of protecting an area. My first reaction to the lake was that it wasn't a lake at all, that in fact it was really only a pond! After growing up

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## President's Message

About a thousand people took part in the fun-filled family event dubbed “Ice Cream Sunday” that served as a launch and fundraiser for the partnership between Habitat Acquisition Trust (HAT) and Arenaria.

There was no cost to participate in the presentations or nature walks, but donations were gratefully accepted. Locally made, all natural Shady Creek Ice Cream was scooped into hundreds of cones by owner/operators Christie and Marvin Eng, as well as other volunteers. A portion of the ice cream sales was generously donated to HAT, as well as the time and expertise of dragonfly expert Rob Cannings, and native plant experts Brenda Costanzo and April Pettinger. These new authors also spent time autographing their books, which are available at the Goldstream Nature House at a discount to HAT members. The campaign to keep the nature house open was launched in grand style and the feedback was extremely favourable. Participants said that they really appreciated a “feel good” event. So did we!



Since no one should need an excuse to eat ice cream, watch for more “Ice Cream Sundays” when the warm season returns. In the meantime, another “feel-good” event fast approaching is “Musical HATs”: our annual fundraiser that involves amazingly talented conservationists, scrumptious goodies and drinks, and gives you a happy feeling in your heart! Check page 4 for details.

*Andy MacKinnon, President*



*Owner/operator Christie Eng serving up some decadence to willing participants. Volunteers Karen Yearsley and Sandra Thomson helped with the scooping*



*Dave Fraser taking artistic license with Angus MacKinnon's face. The variety of “animals” prowling around the park by the end of the day was astounding.*

## “List” Lengthens continued

(continued from Page 1)

adjacent to the Thompson River and later Okanagan Lake, I still haven't quite wrapped my mind around what I call the “island scale” of ecosystems.

By spending an afternoon exploring its teeming waters, I was face to face with its significance. Fresh water is a precious commodity on the Gulf Islands: these are the driest places in Canada in the summer and wildlife is drawn to it from all around. And to put Laughlin Lake in perspective, it is similar in size to Swan Lake and Blenkinsop Lake: wetland ecosystems we all hold dear.

There was an incredibly rich diversity of dragonflies and damselflies, including a species that I have wanted to see for several years: the Common Green Darner (*Anax junius*). This is the largest dragonfly we have in BC and the only member of its genus. The most magical experience of the day was the thousands of damselflies coasting along just above the water's surface. Their abundance drew others interested in a dainty meal: swallows, waxwings, and even other species of dragonflies were appreciating their presence in a far different way.

On the way home from Galiano I found myself recognizing another aspect of the lake that it took a visit to really cement: the absence of the introduced American Bullfrog (*Rana catesbiana*) and the amazing numbers of native frogs, both Red-legged Frog (*Rana aurora*) and Pacific Treefrog (*Hyla regilla*). I have lived adjacent to the “source” of the invasion of bullfrogs in the Victoria region (Beaver Lake) for so long that I have lost sight of what an intact amphibian fauna should look like. I saw it that day. The water's edges were alive with Red-legged Frog tadpoles in various stages of development and we found adults sunning themselves on the shoreline. The vegetation surrounding the wetland was festooned with new-this-year treefrogs; all positioned to capture the warmth of the sun and not all having chosen a very discreet location - natural selection at work! Occasionally a Rough-skinned Newt, *Taricha granulosa*, would appear at the surface to forage or breathe and then swim back down to the depths. Even they are not immune to the depredations of the voracious bullfrog, despite their toxic flavourings.



Our knowledge of life at Laughlin Lake grew again with a Victoria Natural History Society field trip in September. Two new species of dragonflies were documented, and I was surprised to find a Pacific Tree-frog with bright blue legs. Bruce took a picture to prove it but the one we used (above) was a better photo.

At HAT, we have been working with the Galiano Conservancy Association and Islands Trust Fund to purchase the 27-acre property. HAT has received a recent contribution of \$3000 from the Barraclough Foundation, and several generous private donations. This brings the amount needed to complete the purchase to about \$63,000. That's 1000 donations of \$63, 100 donations of \$630, 10 donations of \$6300, or, well, you know the rest!

Claudia Copley

**Donations can be made by contacting HAT at 995-2428, and are tax-receiptable.**

## Wants and Needs

If you have recently upgraded your computer and you have items taking up space in your office, then we would welcome them at the HAT office! We are currently working with Windows 98, 62 megabytes of RAM, and 32 bit memory. We could also really use a reasonably recent version of CorelDraw.

If it is space in your garage you're trying to free up, then a small vacuum cleaner would be a big help. We would be pleased to issue a tax receipt for the market value of any equipment donation.

## HAT Fundraising

### And the Winner Is...

On June 30, 2002, Phyllis Ferris became the proud owner of 30 beautiful limited edition prints by exceptional local artist Loucas Raptis. These prints, donated by the artist, feature the freshwater fish of Vancouver Island and can be purchased (for all the rest of us that didn't win them in this year's raffle!) directly from Loucas.

If you are still feeling lucky, there is another opportunity to buy raffle tickets from HAT staff, directors, or at the Goldstream Visitor Centre. Your "twoonie" supports ongoing and very worthwhile endeavours; in addition to giving you that little thrill of anticipation! Prizes in this raffle include a framed giclee print by Mark Hobson, a giant stuffed teddy bear, a Lone Pine field guide set (generously donated), another book set donated by Chapters plus a laminated satellite photo or a bird course and field guide donated by the Victoria Natural History Society. The draw for the next raffle is Halloween so time is running out! **Help selling tickets is always appreciated!**

### Join us for HAT's AGM!

**December 11, 2002, 7:30 p.m. Swan Lake Nature Sanctuary, 3873 Swan Lake Rd**

Refreshments will be served

This is an opportunity to celebrate our successes of the past year, but we also conduct some important matters of business, including electing HAT Directors. Only HAT members may vote at an AGM; memberships will be sold at the Meeting.

# Musical HATs Is Back!

(Coffeehouse-style event: now at 2 venues!)

**Oct. 19<sup>th</sup> :Metchosin Community Hall**

(4401 William Head Rd)

**Nov. 9<sup>th</sup>:Prospect Lake Community Hall**

(5358 Sparton Rd)

Doors open at 6:30 and the music begins at 7:30

**Tickets: \$10.00, at the HAT Office (995-24  
or at the Goldstream Visitor Centre**



## HAT Projects

### Conservation Connection 2002

In June this year, with the help of Environment Canada, local businesses, volunteers, and the Blair Family Foundation, HAT invited all local conservation groups to help us celebrate the completion of an incredible new resource: the “Green Legacies” guide for donors interested in ecological gifting opportunities. This beautiful new handbook, part of the *Stewardship Series* of



*A keen participant in the cake-cutting ceremony (above); checking out the conservation organization's displays (top right); and well-known philanthropist Mel Cooper giving the keynote address at the launch (bottom right).*

guidebooks, is a comprehensive look at donation options when it comes to “green gifting”. We have copies of the guidebooks at the HAT office and we would be pleased to answer any questions you may have.

### Lagoon Launch

Sometimes, before any real work can get done, a thorough cleaning is in order. And that is just what we did at Esquimalt Lagoon on September 19: the Great Canadian Shoreline Clean-up. And it wasn't just HAT out there with latex gloves and garbage bags: the Esquimalt Lagoon Stewardship Initiative (ELSI) is made of many member organizations all working towards improving and protecting Esquimalt Lagoon for all its many user groups. The clean-up was a fun way for everyone to get together and feel like they were contributing and it was definitely needed! The Esquimalt Lagoon Enhancement Association generously provided BBQ fixings for a little social gathering afterwards so that everyone had a chance to get to know one another.

HAT's work in the region is about to get into high gear. We will be beginning our landowner contact program around the Lagoon as part of our “Good Neighbours” project beginning in October, as well as participating in special event days being organized by ELSI. We received a grant from the Provincial Capital Commission's Greenways Program to augment our EcoAction funding in this regard and we are looking forward to meeting our goals around Esquimalt Lagoon within the next few months. Residents of the area will get to know HAT through a mailout and a personal home visit, should they wish it. We will also be providing information about land conservation options at an ELSI-sponsored open house on November 2, 2002.

## Completion of the Tod Creek Fishway

The Pacific Salmon Foundation provided HAT with funding to complete a small fishway on lower Tod Creek to assist Coho Salmon in making their way further upstream this fall. The result will be spawning salmon for future generations. Work was completed this summer and early fall when Victoria's dry season reduces flows to a trickle. Now all we need to do is sit back and watch for the return of the salmon!

Water quality problems, obstructions, and agricultural practices have all had impacts on the salmonid populations in Tod Creek. The original Coho population of Tod Creek was extirpated in the late 1970s and, although Coho Salmon were restocked in Tod Creek during the 1980s, only low escapements have resulted because of restricted access to the majority of the habitat. Work on the fishway was carried out by Coastal Enterprise and Resource Centre (CERCA) which has been working on Tod Creek for several years.

HAT has had a long involvement in the Tod Creek Watershed and we feel that this component of the work creates the final link between improved water quality, ongoing habitat restoration, and stewardship initiatives, for the species that can utilize the area to complete their lifecycle.

## Land Trusts 101

*Conservation is humanity caring for the future. - Nancy Newhall*

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 many conservation organizations are active here. So who are they?

Among the dozens of organizations at work on various projects in this region, the Sierra Club and the Western Canada Wilderness Committee are examples of large organizations that lobby effectively for the protection of public land, like the Sooke Hills. Others, like the Friends of Mount Douglas Park, and the Esquimalt Lagoon Stewardship Initiative, exist in support of specific locations. They are like the lobby groups in that they are generally not set up to handle land transactions. There is another group of organizations, known loosely as land trusts, which conserve land by outright acquisition, and establishing legal agreements with landowners. These organizations may work in limited areas, or they may choose larger mandates.



Three land trusts in the CRD limit their work to individual islands: the Salt Spring Island Conservancy, the Galiano Conservancy Association, and the Pender Islands Conservancy Association. The Islands Trust Fund, established by the provincial government in 1990, operates in much the same way as other conservancies. The goal of these groups is to protect the unique natural values in the Gulf Islands and, over the years, they have worked to secure protected areas on eight of the thirteen major islands in the area.

There are also four land trusts in the Capital Region that have mandates ranging from regional to national in scope, which is enough to confuse the most dedicated conservationist! The only organization with a national focus is the Nature Conservancy of Canada (NCC), founded in 1962, and headquartered in Toronto, with regional offices throughout Canada. The British Columbia Region office is in Victoria. There are two groups in our area that have a provincial focus: the Nature Trust of British Columbia and TLC The Land Conservancy of BC. The Nature

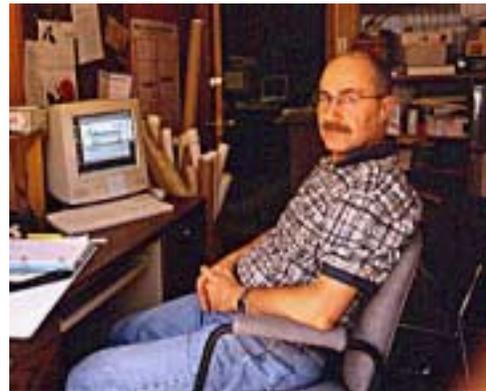
Trust of British Columbia was created by the provincial government in 1971 with an endowment of federal funds, and is based on the lower mainland. TLC was formed in 1997 and has its head office in Saanich, with field offices elsewhere in BC. In 1996, the Victoria Natural History Society established Habitat Acquisition Trust, with a mandate area of the Capital Regional District (which includes the southern Gulf Islands). Our office is located in downtown Victoria and open to the public during business hours.

A powerful conservation tool was made available to non-profit organizations, when, in 1994, changes to provincial legislation allowed certain non-government organizations to hold conservation covenants (in addition to governments). These covenants are voluntarily applied to provide protection of natural values. This protection is registered on the title of the land, and binds all subsequent owners to the terms. It is a very cost-effective way to protect habitat, because it does not involve the direct purchase of land. All of these land trusts can and do hold covenants, on both privately owned and publicly owned land (such as parks). It has become standard practice in BC for two organizations to hold a covenant jointly, and we're fortunate to have excellent partners. HAT currently holds 14 covenants, with five more in progress.

These land trusts all share a common goal; to protect a rapidly-dwindling natural heritage, in a region where development pressure has created extremely high land values. Foundations and governments provide some welcome project support, and the CRD park levy will provide significant capital to land trusts. But these land trusts also need your support, and your donation will support any one of them. With it, they can continue their work, and this part of the world will continue to be the kind of place we'd like to call home. What's important, in the end, is that habitat is conserved. For more information on these and other local conservation organizations, check out HAT's Conservation Connection website: [www.conservationconnection.bc.ca](http://www.conservationconnection.bc.ca).

## HAT People

Whenever I'm feeling frustrated with the dated technology at the HAT office (always!) I have to laugh at how Charlie Leross, our "on site computer technician" must feel! Charlie came to us through a request at Volunteer Victoria that appealed to his love of computers and interest in databases in particular. I haven't met anyone as intrepid as Charlie in a long time: our request was for someone to teach us how to use our new database software called Ebase. Charlie was not familiar with Ebase, but he knows it inside out now, well enough to teach us Luddites (Bruce and I) and Lyndis Davis, a regular volunteer in the office. What a sight: a HAT volunteer teaching another HAT volunteer the ins and outs of a program essential to our day to day success. What Charlie didn't realize when he signed on with us was how many different computer "challenges" he would be asked to solve for us! But nothing fazes him. In fact he appears to relish a challenge. Which is good, because every day a few more appear!



Our work with regard to our membership and donor lists received a welcome contribution from a supportive member of the business community: VanCity generously provided HAT with a grant for \$5,000 to assist us in bringing our database information into the 21<sup>st</sup> century and a more workable format. We determined that Ebase, a free database created by a non-profit organization for other non-profits, is a suitable database for our needs. Now all that is needed is the continued support of Charlie: he's only a phone call away!

*Claudia Copley*



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Arenaria Research and Interpretation	Nature Conservancy of Canada
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