



Habitat
Acquisition
Trust

2022 ANNUAL REPORT





CONSERVING NATURAL SPACES **WHERE WE WORK**

HAT strives to work in partnership with the original stewards of this region, including the W̱SÁNEĆ, ləkʷəŋən, Sc'ianew, and T'Sou-ke Peoples, and the many other Coast Salish families who have lived in relationship with and stewarded these lands since time immemorial, and continue to live in relationship to the land today.

Our mandate area centers around the Capital Regional District of BC, and consists of southern Vancouver Island and the southern Gulf Islands within the Salish Sea. Through our new 2020-2024 Strategic Plan, HAT has been working to align organizational practices with reconciliation

principles. We acknowledge that decolonizing takes time, and we are prioritizing relationship-building based on trust at both the nation-level and grassroots community-based level.



Working with HAT and my local Indigenous relatives from the W̱SÁNEĆ, ləkʷəŋən, T'souke and SC'IAKNEW communities have been very fulfilling. The HAT team conduct themselves with great respect to our communities which helps make this learning feel safe, fun, and invigorating.

ŚW,XELOSELWET Tiffany Joseph

HAT's Indigenous-led Planning Consultant



HELLO AND WELCOME

MESSAGE FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Dear Friends, it's an honour to present another year's worth of HAT's conservation impact to you, HAT's members, donors, volunteers and partners. As a community-based organization, we truly could not deliver the unique depth and scope of work that HAT is known for without all of you. We thank you for enabling us to continue to do cutting-edge work in some of Canada's most endangered landscapes in 2022.

This year, HAT registered a new covenant that protects populations of Red-legged frogs and a strong population of the endangered Purple Sanicle flower. We also announced a major milestone with the Sc'ianew (Beecher Bay) First Nation and other project supporters to collaboratively explore the creation of an Indigenous Protected Area in Sc'ianew territory at Mary Hill.

2022 also marked our second field season with the hardworking HAT Restoration Crew. The 6-person crew cleared invasive plants like broom and daphne from 3.5 hectares (almost 9 acres) of protected lands, restoring habitat for native plant and pollinator species to flourish. The dedicated, consistent hard work of this fantastic crew meant we could make substantial improvements to ecosystem integrity and well-being of these important natural areas.

Our Good Neighbours Program is focused on the iconic and critically imperiled Coastal Oak and Prairie Ecosystems (a.k.a. Garry Oak). These ecosystems have been stewarded since time immemorial by the Indigenous communities on whose unceded territories HAT operates. We are proud to participate in their ongoing restoration and support of these cultural landscapes with an increasing focus on adding capacity to Indigenous-led conservation efforts.

Thank you again for being part of HAT's community dedicated to the ecological health of southern Vancouver Island and the southern Gulf Islands through conservation, stewardship, and community collaboration.



Katie Blake
Executive Director



Elizabeth Easton
Board President

“ As we roll into the new year, from the chillier somnific winter season toward the rejuvenating spring warmth, we can all reflect very positively on the Habitat Acquisition Trust's (HAT) activities of the past year. In 2021/22, HAT staff, along with volunteers, and supported by our generous donors and members, continued forward on the solid, stable path that has been established over the past years, to action the protection and stewardship of the unique lands and habitats of southern Vancouver Island through ongoing programs, collaborations, partnerships and education.

HAT also continues to use its unique expertise and negotiation skills to inspire and empower others to protect lands and embrace the broader goal of land conservation and habitat enhancement.

It is not possible to do all this good work in isolation. No land trust is an island, it takes a diverse and engaged community to accomplish so much. On behalf of the Board of Directors I would like to thank all our members, volunteers, donors, and amazing staff for their engagement, dedication and enthusiasm in helping HAT achieve its goals. We, as a board, are proud to be involved in the governance of such an esteemed organization. Thank you all so much for being involved! ”



MEMBERSHIP AND DONORS

BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS

In August, HAT held our first Members Lunch in 3 years gathering nearly 40 members together over a lunch from Red Barn at the Swan Lake Christmas Hill Nature Sanctuary.

Slightly different than the pre-COVID events, the time spent apart during the pandemic gave us the chance to reflect on how important personal connections are, and we sought to honour those relationships that we share with and through HAT. That's why this year's Members Lunch focused on members sharing their stories about what drew them to HAT, and what has kept them connected to ecological well-being and stewardship over the years. We look forward to the 2023 Members Lunch this summer!

This past year also saw HAT strengthen our friendship with the Wavelengths Community Choir, the Getting' Higher Choir, and Big Brothers Big Sisters of Victoria. We are grateful for their volunteer hours restoring habitat at Oak Haven Park, and fundraising for HAT's work. Thank you!

In the coming year, we hope to be good guests on these territories and support more

stewardship projects with W̱SÁNEĆ and lək̓ʷəŋən communities and their members.

Conservation holds the potential to work in a better way with our Indigenous hosts, and HAT aims to bring Indigenous voices into spaces where they are often obscured, learning how conversations around ecosystem well-being can lead to more equitable relationships in these territories.



“ I believe in supporting local organizations that do critical conservation and outreach work. HAT has accomplished outstanding regional restoration efforts while also helping our community to grow its environmental awareness - the 'Gardening with Native Plants Guide' has been a touchstone for me and so many others. ”

- Cara Gibson

HAT Member & Executive Director Swan Lake Christmas Hill Nature Sanctuary



PROTECTED LANDS





1

New Protected Area

2

Species-at-Risk for which new habitat is protected

156

Hectares Monitored

PROTECTING LAND **LEAVING A LEGACY**

HAT's Land Protection program works with private landowners, community organizations, Indigenous Nations, and governments to protect the rare and endangered ecosystems on Southern Vancouver Island and the Gulf Islands.

This year, we registered a new covenant in Metchosin with one of HAT's long-standing Habitat Stewards who have been a part of the Good Neighbours program for over a decade. The property contains rocky outcrops with a diversity of native wildflowers, including a healthy population of Purple Sanicle (BC red-list; COSEWIC "Threatened"). Additionally, there is dense forest and a small wetland that provides habitat and refuge for wildlife, including Northern Red-legged Frog (BC blue-list; COSEWIC "Special Concern").

The covenant will protect these and many other species in perpetuity. In the landowner's

words, "we have the knowledge and a feeling of peace that, even long after we are gone and forgotten, the plants and creatures that live here will be protected [...] We would say to anyone contemplating putting a covenant on their land: think about what our species is doing worldwide to the homes of all those creatures and other organisms that have no say in the matter. Love them like you love your pets and do what you can to make a small lasting gap in our onslaught".

This year, HAT monitored 16 conservation covenants, totaling over 150 hectares of protected land. This work was made possible by the invaluable effort of Brigitte Austin, HAT's Conservation Intern.

Looking ahead to 2023, HAT is actively working on new protected areas and looking at ways to expand the Land Protection program.

Supporting Indigenous Protected and Conserved Areas

Since 2019 HAT has been supporting the Sc'ianew First Nation in investigating an Indigenous Protected Area that focuses on conserving 138 hectares of Treaty Settlement Lands located at Mary Hill in Metchosin. This year, Sc'ianew, HAT, District of Metchosin and Pearson College signed a Standstill Agreement that gives 18 months of exclusivity of planning focus on a protected area outcome. At the heart of this project is the collaborative approach that HAT and the other project supporters are taking to advance reconciliation efforts with SC'IANEW to ensure long-term ecological and socio-economic sustainability on the land. You can find out more about the project at www.maryhillipa.ca



HABITAT RESTORATION PROGRAM THRIVING TOGETHER

The year of 2022 kicked off with an exciting collaboration with Esquimalt Nation artist Darlene Gait, Esquimalt Hereditary Chief Edward Thomas, and Songhees Elder Elmer George, who is a ləkʷəŋən language speaker. Working together, new interpretive signage was created for the Matson Conservation Area highlighting ləkʷəŋən culture and the native ecology of the area. The installation of the new signage marked the beginning of a lively time at Matson, being followed by fascinating two-day lichen workshop, and the return of the annual Spring Fling.

Throughout the year, habitat restoration efforts continued to be carried out with vigor, as the Friends of Havenwood Park and the Matson Mattocks stewardship group held weekly restoration work parties, and habitat restoration events saw strong turnouts from our dedicated community of volunteers.

As autumn arrived HAT was able to hire another Restoration Field Crew, who tackled some massive infestations of invasive plants on HAT protected lands. Our fall Restoration

Field Crew members were Georgina Underwood, Nick Olsen, Renee Robinson, Kyle Clarke, Vanessa Brownlee, and Ellie Fox. Over the course of just over eight weeks the crew managed to clear an area measuring approximately 35, 000 square meters (nearly the size of five football fields) of invasive plants, opening up all of this space to become potential native habitat.

In light of the many challenges that arise when working to restore an ecosystem, it is always heartening to see just how many people come out to support ecological stewardship and restoration efforts with HAT, facing the sometimes difficult work with laughter and determination in equal measure.



Max Mitchell
Habitat Management Coordinator

“Removing invasive species engaged me with the earth each time I visited the little mountain. Messages communicated in my mindful prayers helped me understand where I am in my own life and how important it is to educate our youth regarding stewardship.”

Georgina Underwood
Restoration Crew Member

165

Cubic meters of invasive plant matter removed from natural areas by the restoration crew

1532

Volunteer hours restoring native habitat

185

Volunteer stewards engaged

CARING FOR NATURE





STEWARDSHIP PROGRAM

A MULTI-FACETED APPROACH

In 2022, HAT worked hard to continue supporting landowners, youth, stewardship groups, organizations, and Indigenous communities with their stewardship initiatives. We strive to empower individuals to become stewards through on-the ground training and support. Here is a look at some of the things we accomplished in 2022:

YOUTH ENGAGEMENT

- HAT's youth engagement program looked a little different this year. We have shifted focus from our school ground-based approach to instead empowering youth to be stewards of oak areas and wildlife habitat within their broader communities. With help from our partners like Power to Be, SṪÁUTW, WMÍYETEN Mary Lake Nature Sanctuary, we held 8 collaborative youth events with a total of 178 participants, and established 143 native plants with the SṪÁUTW youth group.

SKILL-BUILDING & COLLABORATIONS

- HAT's plant salvaging initiative continued with great success training 82 individuals over 3 sessions on how to rescue oak-associated native plants from a development site.
- Supported five collaborative community events held with PEPÁKEN HÁUTW at SNIDČEŁ, and co-hosted four English ivy removal days with artist Sarah Jim at WSÍKEM Forest.
- Continuing our partnership with the Stewards of Sc'ianew Society, we co-hosted 3 plant propagation workshops, planted 25 plants, and supported the removal of 7 cubic meters of invasive species from the Sc'ianew Nation territory.

WILDLIFE HIGHLIGHTS

- A barn in North Saanich was successfully converted to be bat friendly so that tenants and bats can coexist.
- A barn swallow nesting structure was built to replace a barn that was being torn down. The barn swallows nested there this summer.

“ Stewardship activities with HAT has brought excitement to our local WŚÁNEĆ communities to build our capacity with invasive removals and helping create biodiversity of foods, medicines, and animal habitat within our territory. ”

ŚW,XELOSELWET Tiffany Joseph

Indigenous-led Planning Consultant





GOOD NEIGHBOURS OAK AND PRAIRIE **EMPOWERING STEWARDS**

Oak and Prairie Areas (also known as Garry Oak ecosystems) are home to more than 100 threatened or endangered plants and animals. Once abundant throughout the region, there is now as little as 1% of local oak areas left. Community members like you play a critical role in supporting the long-term health of these important eco-cultural landscapes.

In response, HAT launched the “Empowering Stewards of Oak and Prairie Areas” project applying a collaborative, partnership-based approach to develop a community of Habitat Stewards who are trained and empowered to effectively steward these ecosystems. This ensures tangible benefits for the conservation of wildlife and their Oak and Prairie habitat.

Conservation actions you can make possible by supporting this project include reconnecting W̱SÁNEĆ community members to their ancestral lands, and restoring critical habitat for plants and animals at risk like the Threatened Western Bumblebee and Slimleaf Onion at Oak Haven Park.

Learn more about caring for our local oak and prairie areas and empowering those who steward them at hat.bc.ca/oaks.



Stewardship Coordinator Ronna Woudstra with new Habitat Steward in her oak meadow currently undergoing restoration.

38

**SITE VISITS TO
LANDOWNERS**

19

**STEWARDSHIP SKILL
BUILDING WORKSHOPS**

32

**SQUARE METERS OF OAK
ECOSYSTEMS RESTORED
WITH HABITAT STEWARDS**

WILDLIFE STEWARDSHIP

AN EYE OUT FOR WILDLIFE

2022 was a great year for wildlife stewardship at HAT. We work to support our local wildlife through monitoring, outreach, and habitat enhancement, as well as running the South Island Chapter of the Community Bat Program.

This year, HAT co-hosted 16 workshops and events relating to wildlife stewardship including bats, Western Painted Turtles, Blue-grey Taildropper slugs, and other species at risk. A total of 359 participants attended these events and workshops.

Pictured below: A successful clutch of Western Screech Owl chicks and their protective mother in one of our HAT made and installed nest boxes.



A grand total of 72 people volunteered to help with wildlife monitoring surveys, build bat habitat, and create outreach materials. Their efforts reached an impressive 367 volunteer hours.

Through the year we conducted wildlife monitoring surveys at 86 different sites throughout the Capital Regional District, including monitoring for the presence of Western Screech-Owls and bats. This year we celebrated a successful clutch with 4 fledged Western Screech Owl chicks in a HAT nest box.

Danielle Buckle
Wildlife Stewardship Coordinator

"The Wildlife Stewardship Program is a great way for landowners and volunteers to get involved in caring for important ecosystems."

86

WILDLIFE
MONITORING
SURVEYS

72

VOLUNTEER
PARTICIPANTS

367

VOLUNTEER
HOURS

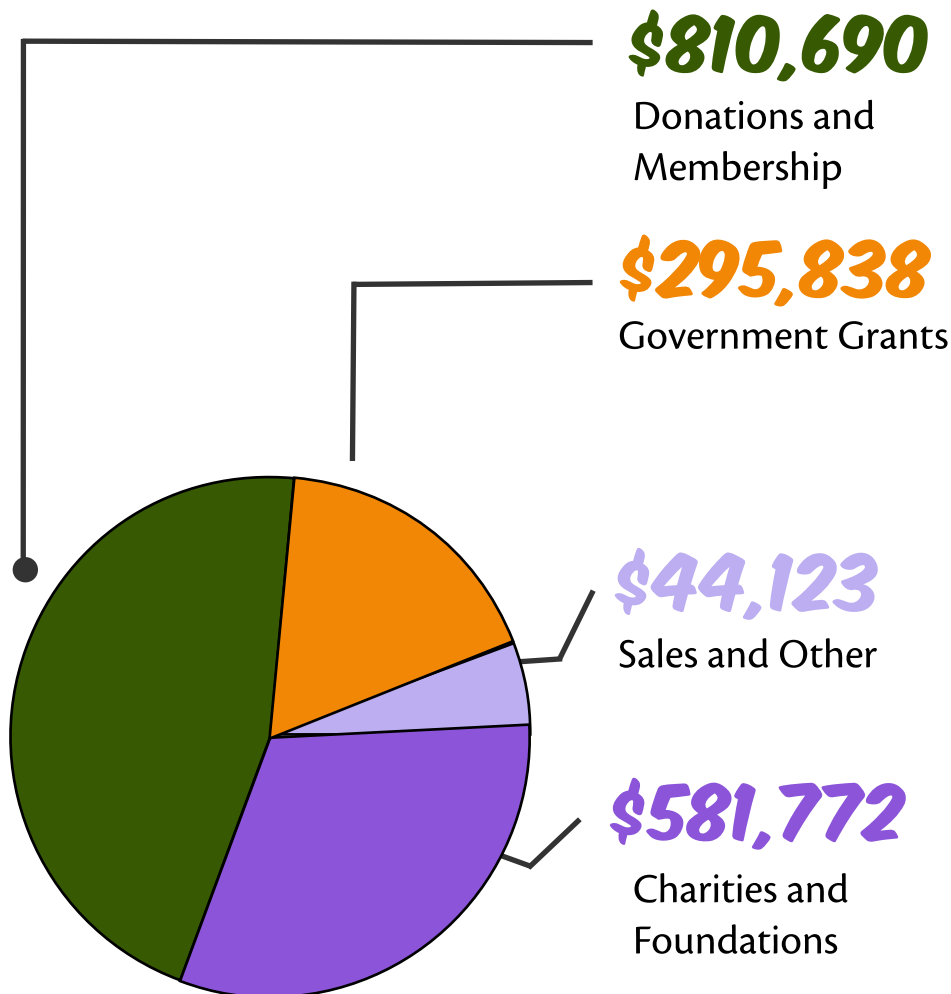
16

WORKSHOPS
AND
EVENTS

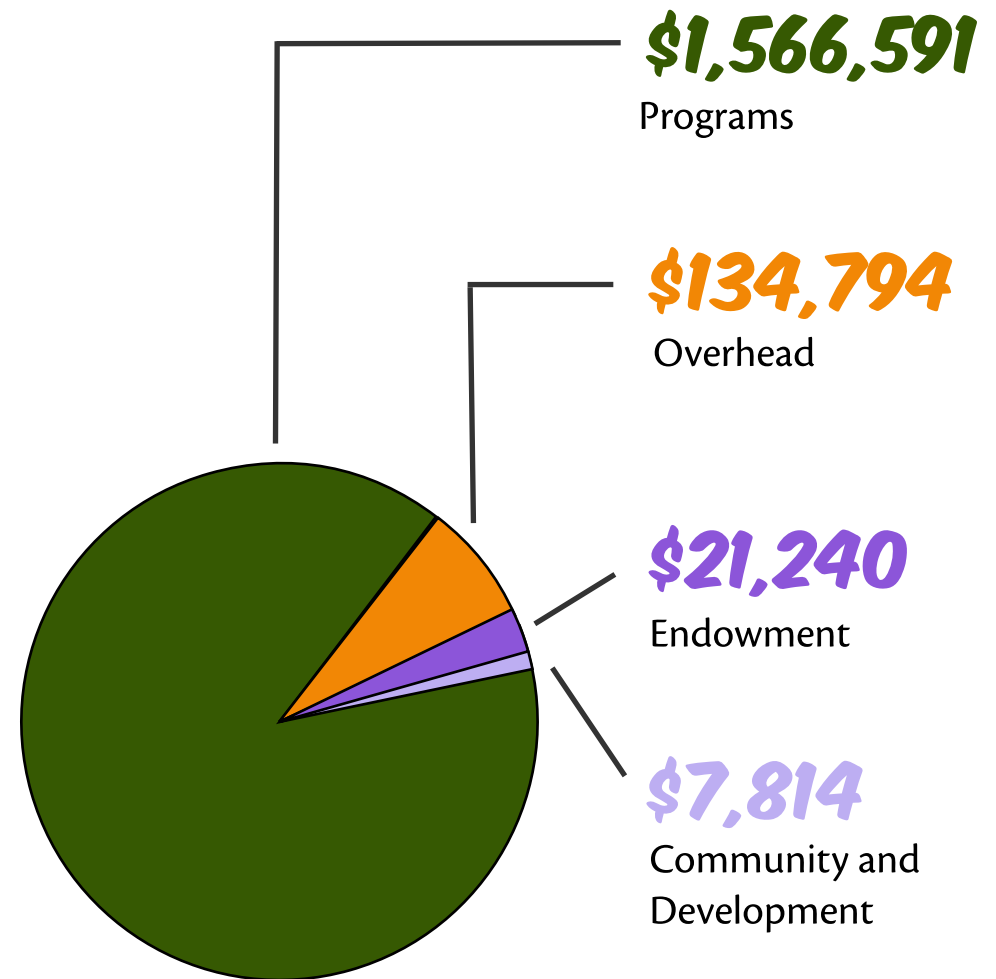
YEAR END OCTOBER 31, 2022

FINANCIALS FOR 2021-2022

INCOME



EXPENSES





THE PEOPLE

THE HAT TEAM

.....

Katie Blake, *Executive Director*

Paige Erickson-McGee, *Program Manager*

Max Mitchell, *Habitat Restoration Coordinator*

Sara Yeomans, *Land Protection Coordinator*

Ronna Woudstra, *Good Neighbours Stewardship Coordinator*

Danielle Buckle, *Wildlife Stewardship Coordinator*

Chris "Kikila" Perrin, *Community & Development Coordinator*

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Brigitte Austin, *Conservation Intern*

Georgina Underwood, *Restoration Crew*

Renee Robinson, *Restoration Crew*

Kyle Clarke, *Restoration Crew*

Vanessa Brownlee, *Restoration Crew*

Ellie Fox, *Restoration Crew*

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