

Dedicated Landowners Enable Conservation Success!

The Board and staff of Okanogan Land Trust know how time-consuming conservation easement projects can be, from stretched out deadlines, delayed consultations, erratic program guidelines, and funding mechanisms that start and stop over months at a time. This year the pandemic has added to the usual challenges, but persevere we must! We have been blessed in 2020 with willing and engaged landowners that stuck with us throughout, and as a result, we will secure conservation of just under 2,900 acres of land by year's end!



First up, OLT is now in the final stages of conserving nearly 2,700 acres of land owned by the Ellis-Barnes Livestock Company, which partnered with OLT on a previous CE project in 2012. This part of the ranch, which includes the Similkameen River shoreline at Shanker's Bend, has a nice mixture of rangeland, wet meadows, and some forested ground. The property will now be protected forever and dedicated to agricultural productivity and open space. A portion of the project is underwritten by a grant from the State of Washington Farmland Preservation Program but the majority of the funding comes from a charitable match made by the family. We owe a great debt to the Barnes families, both for their patience in seeing this project through but more importantly for their generosity in making the conservation of this vital ground possible.

On a smaller scale, yet still significant, we are working with Lee Miller and George Thornton to secure conservation of their property in the headwater area of Mosquito and Whisky Cache creeks. The property is thick with Aspen and has benefited from the owners' care and nurturing over time. Multiple species of birds make use of the native vegetation, and signs of wildlife abound and during a site visit last summer. (continued on p. 2)

Working for Wildlife: Cooperative Conservation

Cooperative Conservation has proven to be an exciting and successful method for protecting and conserving open space, wildlife, native plants, and water quality in a way that can encompass large landscapes. When those committed to conservation work together, BIG things can happen! Okanogan County is fortunate to have many dedicated conservation organizations, and the Okanogan Land Trust (OLT) is proud to be among them.

For the past seven years, a coalition has been engaged in the Working For Wildlife Initiative (W4W) to protect and improve habitat connectivity stretching from the Kettle River Range to the Cascade Mountains. Organized and funded by the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (NFWF), the agencies and organizations

involved are OLT, Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife, Department of Natural Resources, Colville Confederated Tribes, Okanogan Conservation District, Conservation Northwest, the U.S. Forest Service, Safe Passage 97, Trust for Public Land, and the Mule Deer Foundation. Wildlife species of concern within the habitat are Canadian Lynx, Sharp Tailed Grouse, and Mule Deer. (continued on p. 3)



("Conservation Success" continued)

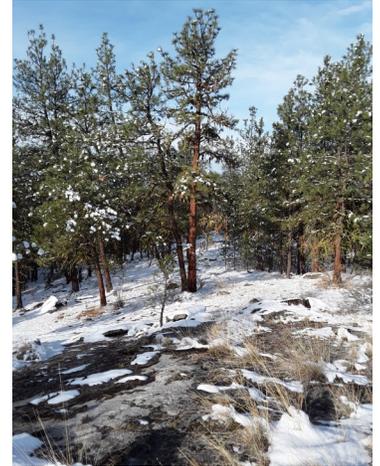
Both Bighorn Sheep and Golden Eagles were observed resting on the northern edge of the property. Again, this project is being made possible by the generosity of the landowners in donating the value of the conservation easement. The gift is a continuation of Lee and George's support of OLT's mission, support that extends back for almost two decades!

The last project we anticipate bringing to conclusion in December is located in the Aeneas Valley right at the hydrological divide between the Okanogan and the San Poil Rivers. The Fat Cat Farm easement is a result of a



great deal of patience from Val and Matt Welles. Matt and Val worked with the American Bird Conservancy to create nesting habitat for white-headed woodpeckers over the course of several years. Multiple sightings and active nesting sites during recent site visits attest to the value of the Welles' work in the woods. Again,

this is a donated easement made possible by our willing landowners. Both the Welles and the Miller/Thornton projects are being assisted by additional support from the American Bird Conservancy for the long-term stewardship of these shared landscapes.



So, with success near at hand what lies on the horizon? OLT submitted 4 new projects, totaling over 4,000 acres, to the state in the farmland and forest protection categories in September. All scored near the top in the rankings, and we anticipate bringing them to successful conclusion in 2021. In addition, we have a Ferry County project up for federal farmland protection, an expansion of an existing Okanogan Highlands ranch conservation easement, and two south Okanogan County projects proceeding under the umbrella of climate resiliency conservation! Your local land trust at work! Bring on 2021!!

OkaKnowledgy 2020 Speaker Series Goes Virtual!

"OkaKnowledgy" is OLT's educational speaker series which focuses on naturalist topics and social history of Washington presented in an entertaining light. OLT held the series' 3rd year in 2020. After two highly successful in-person events, the Covid-19 crisis prompted our move to virtual events. Thanks to the incredible OLT community, these events were every bit as successful!

- In January, *Upstream* author Langdon Cook presented on the role of salmon in the Pacific Northwest, and we hosted a panel on local salmon recovery. Held at the Okanogan PUD, the event featured an opening song from the Omak Citizens.
- In February, naturalist Don Rolfs wowed adults and children alike with his presentation on native bees. Again opened by the Omak Citizens native drumming group, this event was also at the Okanogan PUD.
- In May, geologist Bruce Bjornstad took the Zoom controls and presented *Ice Age Floodscapes of the Pacific Northwest*.
- In August, author and journalist Harriet Baskas presented *Washington on Wheels: Odd and Innovative Transportation Ideas from the Pacific Northwest*. Also via Zoom, this event was held in association with Humanities Washington.
- In October, landowners, community members, and OLT partners donned costumes, grabbed their beverages of choice, and gathered virtually for Spirits of Conservation, a presentation about conservation easements and OLT's work.

...and OkaKnowledgy continues into 2021!

Paul Bannick presents his stunning photographs of Great Gray Owls, **January 27, 2021** (virtual event, details to follow)

Others to Follow: Check out our website (www.okanoganlandtrust.org) and Facebook page for additional OkaKnowledgy events in 2021!



2020 Ponderosa Giving Campaign: A Shared Success!

The global pandemic has forced countless changes in all our lives. For the safety of our board, staff, and community, OLT has had to move the bulk of its operations to a remote work and virtual meeting regimen. This has caused minimal disruption, and our field work, which by its nature is socially distanced, has continued pretty much as usual.

But one as of the true highlights of our year, the annual Ponderosa Event, approached, we felt considerable trepidation. Each year we gather with the incredible supporters and stakeholders that comprise the OLT community to share a meal, a glass of wine, great conversation and friendship, a featured speaker, and updates on OLT's work. How could we hold this event in the age of Covid?

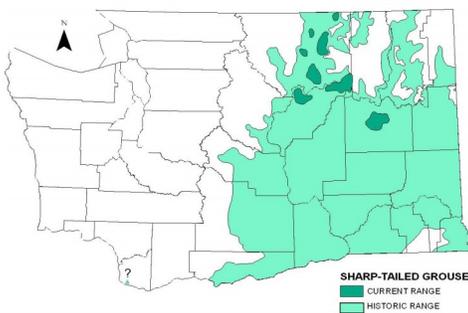
Circumstances compelled us to alter our plans, so we went forward with a virtual Ponderosa Giving Campaign. It was a first for OLT and we kept our expectations in check.

WOW were we wrong! This incredible community humbled us with your outpouring of support! YOU upped your game and made this a huge success. From the bottom of our hearts, THANK YOU for your contributions to our shared conservation successes!

We sincerely hope we can gather in person in 2021. We miss you!



("Collaborative Conservation: W4W" continued)



As human development advances, with land divided into small parcels, the ensuing increase in houses, fences, invasive plant species, light,

noise, and traffic threaten Okanogan and Ferry County's open spaces and agricultural production, while fragmenting wildlife habitat. Through OLT's participation in the W4W effort, we have placed conservation easements on 2,537 acres of privately owned

land and are working to place conservation easements on another 4,276 acres within the next two years. Many of the acres eased are on working ranches, thus supporting and protecting open space, wildlife habitat, and agriculture all at once. The conserved private lands will be protected from development forever and serve to connect our public and Tribal lands, providing large landscapes in which wildlife can travel and thrive.

While attending an annual meeting of those working together under the W4W umbrella, it was interesting to note the role and prioritization of land conservancy during planning. It is impossible to conserve and protect open space, wildlife habitat, agricultural productivity, or water quality without the land upon which all those things depend.

Resource Corner: Website and Apps for Naturalists

In our electronically connected world, engaging in citizen science is as easy as going to your computer or mobile device and participating in online projects that gather, record, and share info and data about the natural world. Here are a few suggestions.

[Inaturalist \(inaturalist.org\)](http://inaturalist.org): Citizen science project and social network with focus on plant and animal identification

[mPING \(mping.ou.edu\)](http://mping.ou.edu): Project to collect weather data from the public through mobile devices

[BirdSleuth \(birds.cornell.edu/k12\)](http://birds.cornell.edu/k12): Science curriculum engaging kids in scientific observation and data collection focusing on birds

[Journey North \(journeynorth.org\)](http://journeynorth.org): Citizen science report tracking hummingbirds, monarch butterflies, robins, and other migratory birds

[Budburst \(budburst.org\)](http://budburst.org): Network of scientists, researchers, educators, and citizen scientists gathering stories of plants and animals affected by human impacts on the environment

OLT Board Perspective: Why I support OLT

John Rohrback, OLT Board Treasurer



It's a bit of a personal question, but what comes to mind for you when you think of the Okanogan? For me, the vision starts with a magnificent river. It's warm and lazy enough to comfortably swim in the summertime, when Sockeye Salmon turn crimson during their

sprint up to the spawning grounds in Canada and Chinook dig redds by the dozen in early October. In the winter, the ducks and geese hardy enough to stick around might have to fly a ways before they can find a patch of open water calm enough to land in. Up above the river there are orchards. Cherries and apples, mainly, but also plums, apricots, peaches, and pears. The fruit grown in this valley is good enough to be shipped the world over, but best enjoyed fresh off the tree, shared with a neighbor.

Climb a bit higher and I hear the coyotes yip and howl in the early morning light, the bubbling song of a Western meadowlark sitting atop a big sagebrush. The shrub steppe rangeland gives way to some scattered Ponderosa pines as I turn my eyes further up. Finally, beyond the foothills that cradle the river where this whole image began, tall, dry mountains, with rocky peaks that hold on to the final vestiges of last year's snowfall until October brings the first dustings and it starts all over again.

Of course, there is more that I love about the Okanogan than just the landscape. Bumping into an old friend in the produce section of the

grocery store. Being able to bike to the office, instead of having to drive on the Interstate. Cheering for the home team at the football game alongside the whole town. What I have described so far, small town living within an incredibly productive and spectacular landscape, is not something I knew growing up in suburban Seattle. This kind of life we all live out here is not something many people get to experience. But it is our experience. It's the lifestyle I am fortunate enough to be able to choose for myself, and it's the lifestyle I would like to allow others to choose, too. If they want to. Deep down, I hope the secret doesn't get out too far.

For me, the character of the Okanogan is firmly grounded in place. When I think of my home, I don't just think of four walls and a roof, I think of a springtime sun rising over a blooming orchard, or looking at the sumac turning bright red while I drive out to my favorite



chukar hunting spot. By partnering with landowners to secure conservation easements, Okanogan Land Trust works hard to protect open spaces, working lands, and natural habitat. By reaching out and bringing together local residents at educational and service events, Okanogan Land Trust reinforces the land ethic we share with our community. This is the legacy — people working together to protect this place that we all share — that I want to see passed on to future generations. This is why I support Okanogan Land Trust.

Mission

From the Cascades to the Kettles, Canada to the Columbia, Okanogan Land Trust is a local nonprofit organization connecting people to the land and conserving and sustaining our working farms and ranches, wildlife habitats, and water resources for generations to come.

Board of Directors

Gert Webster, President
Cynthia Nelson, Vice President
John Rohrback, Treasurer
Patti Baumgardner, Secretary
Margaret Hartzell, Director
Kayla McIntyre, Director
Dale Swedberg, Director
Janet Culp, Director
Lloyd Odell, Director
Todd Thorn, Director

Staff

Stacy Shutts
 Executive Director
 stacy@okanoganlandtrust.org
Bryan Cook
 Operations Manager
 bryan@okanoganlandtrust.org
Jerry DeBacker
 Senior Conservationist
 jdebacker.olt@gmail.com

Contact Information

Office Location
 203 2nd Ave S, Suite 120
 Okanogan, WA 98840
Mailing Address
 PO Box 325
 Okanogan, WA 98840
Phone
 509-557-6306

Online
www.okanoganlandtrust.org
 Facebook @okanogan.landtrust

Your DONATION Makes a Difference in CONSERVATION!

This work is only possible with YOUR support! Please consider sending a check or donating securely through our website. OLT is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization: EIN #94-311-2454 State charities #25668