

Conservation Restoration Collaboration Sensation!

We at OLT are excited about a new venture we've entered into this year. We are partnering with the Methow Beaver Project (under the umbrella of the Methow Salmon Recovery Foundation) and with conservation-motivated landowners to carry out projects that pair conservation easements with restoration work in fire-affected stream corridors. The two properties selected for this new



undertaking include creeks that have been affected by forest fires and subsequent floods, one in 2014 and one in 2015. Fires and post-fire flooding strip away stream-covering vegetation and destabilize slopes, with many unfortunate consequences. Healthy streams, on the other hand, offer many benefits to fish and other wildlife as well as the wider landscape.

With permits from the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife, staff from the Methow Beaver Project will place Beaver Dam Analogues, Post Assisted Log Structures, and debris constructions in stream to restore these creeks by slowing creek flow during high water, accumulating sediment to get the creeks back in contact with their floodplains, raising and holding groundwater levels, and increasing riparian plant diversity and numbers. With added complexity, these creeks will provide more shade, cooler water, and more food for birds, mammals, fish, amphibians, and insects. With the passage of time, the hope is that beavers, those adept engineers and stewards of healthy

wetlands, will find these creeks to their liking and set up camp. Then, voila! The creeks will be returned to a vibrant, native condition and all that depend on them will thrive.

Funding to support these conservation and restoration projects is provided by the Washington State Department of Ecology's Water Resources Program by way of a Stream Restoration grant. The work placing the structures will begin in the spring of 2022. This past summer, a team consisting of a professor, graduate student, and technical assistant from Eastern Washington University conducted research in the creeks; they measured stream flow, dissolved oxygen, and water residence time, providing baseline values from which comparisons can be made after the structures are in place and the studies continue. Funding for their research was provided by a wildlife research grant from Seattle City Light.

Once again, it is evident that important and much-needed work happens when many agencies and organizations collaborate to accomplish a goal. OLT is grateful to the Methow Beaver Project, the DOE, Seattle City Light, the scientists at EWU, and the landowners participating in this thrilling project.

Come spring, we could sure use some volunteer work from those of you who would enjoy spending time in scenic, watery spots building a better future for all living creatures. See you then!



Message from OLT's Executive Director

One of the best things about my job as Executive Director of OLT is that it puts me right in the middle of things. I have the privilege of speaking with and learning from all kinds of people: landowners and fellow conservation professionals, ranchers and resource managers, longtime OLT supporters and scientists. OLT's work puts us at the center of many of the issues affecting this community, from wildfires to real estate, water quality to equity.

In one such conversation recently, a colleague put his finger on something I've been coming to understand throughout my time here: that this region, far from being a remote place, off on the margins of current trends in ecological science and conservation efforts, is in fact extremely significant. From being at the forefront of this new era of living with fire to our location at the intersection of vital East-West and North-South wildlife migration corridors, our region is unexpectedly central, not only in the minds and hearts of those who live here, but from a wider perspective as well.

Perhaps the same could be said of almost every place, depending on what—or whose—perspective you take. Every place is the center of someone's world. The overlapping crises we face today challenge us to connect ourselves more deeply to the world immediately surrounding us—to learn who and what lives here, what sustains that life, and how to care for it—while at the same time maintaining awareness of the bigger picture and a

sense of solidarity with people elsewhere who are caring for their own communities, their own patches of earth. Our common dependence on and love for our own little corners of the world is what we share with people—and creatures—everywhere.

As we come to the end of 2021, I am full of gratitude for all the people who make this place what it is. OLT's dedicated staff and board have kept the organization focused on its mission and accomplished remarkable things during a period of transition, not to mention a pandemic. I also want to acknowledge and thank OLT's supporters, who have met the challenges of this year with unprecedented generosity. Together, they have made me feel welcome and empowered to lead the organization in exciting new directions.

Right now, we are working to incorporate climate change into our Conservation Plan, build on existing regional partnerships for large-scale landscape conservation, and combine our core work of placing conservation easements with stream restoration (see the lead article of this issue!). In 2022, we will be thinking about how to expand our services for landowners wishing to steward and restore their properties, include a broader swath of the community in our planning and programs, and help make our landscape more resilient. With your support, OLT will continue working to connect land and community, and I am proud and grateful to share that work with you.

-Kate Miller

OLT 2021 Events Recap

As much as we wanted to reconnect with you all in person, conditions compelled us to err on the side of caution and continue to hold our events virtually. But it was another successful year of OLT events, thanks to YOU!



In January, our OkaKnowledge event featured renowned photographer/author **Paul Bannick**, who presented his stunning work on Great Gray Owls.

April's OkaKnowledge event highlighted the vital work of the **Methow Beaver Project** to improve the health and resiliency of our local watersheds.

Our November OkaKnowledge event featured award-winning journalist and essayist Kristen Millares Young, who led a personal essay workshop.



In March, we kept our Spring Forward tradition alive with a special performance by beloved folk singer of the American West **Hank Cramer**.

In October, our Ponderosa Circle Event featured **Mike Devaney** of Lightning River Ranch, who discussed his regenerative and salmon-friendly ranching operations.

More great events to come in 2022!

For all the latest info, visit our **Facebook page** (facebook.com/okanogan.landtrust) and our **website** (www.okanoganlandtrust.org). If you'd like to join our **mailing list**, email us at info@okanoganlandtrust.org

My Little Chickadee

By Gert Webster, OLT Board President

If you have spent time in the winter woods, you have most likely enjoyed the company and cheery songs of Chickadees, those social, companionable little bundles of black, gray, and white feathers. They are with us year-round, but winter is the time they join into flocks and really stand out. The Chickadees we are most likely to see in North Central Washington are the black-capped and the mountain.



Photo from Freerange Stock

A Chickadee weighs between 10 and 14 grams—REALLY little! For comparison, House Sparrows weigh about 30 grams and American Robins usually weigh over 80 grams. Chickadees as old as 12 years have been recorded but the average life span is 2.5 years. They are preyed upon by Sharp-shinned and Cooper's Hawks, American Kestrels, Northern Pygmy Owls, and Northern Shrikes, but the biggest predator threat they face is house cats, especially around bird feeders (please, please keep that cat in the house!). Non-avian predators, such as weasels or climbing snakes, are likely to catch Chickadees at nest sights, but must be able to squeeze into the very small nest hole of the cavity nesting birds.

A Chickadee's diet consists of 70% animal matter and 30%

vegetable, varying through the year with mostly plant material (seeds and berries) in the fall and winter and almost exclusively animal matter in the summer (moths, butterflies, and spiders). The extra protein in animal matter is critical for breeding and brooding. Chickadees store food by random caching, mostly during October and November; they can store hundreds or even thousands of food items in a day! They use small cracks in bark, curled leaves, needle clusters, or knotholes to store and hide food. They also cache food in the ground, in the snow, under roof shingles, in gutters, and in drain pipes. And they can remember these random caches for at least 28 days!

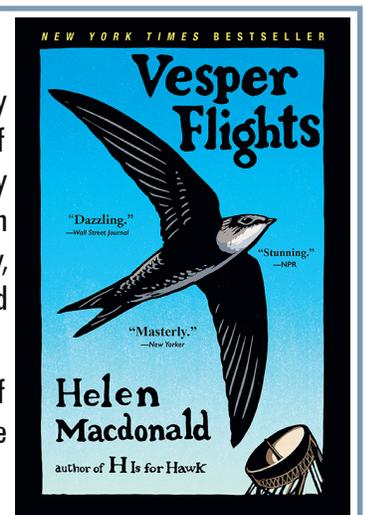
Try to imagine yourself surviving a full winter of harsh weather and long, cold nights without plenty of gear. The little Chickadees blithely accomplish this feat using three adaptations. Since they molt late in the year, they head into winter with thick, fresh plumage, which they fluff to increase the thickness of their insulating layer in extreme cold. Chickadees also save energy by dropping their body temperature each night by 10-12 degrees C below their normal daytime temperature of 42 degrees C. Finally, Chickadees roost for the night in small cavities (sometimes so small that their tail feathers are crimped from bending in the tiny hole), or among thick vegetation in conifers. These protected spots further reduce heat loss caused by winter's cold, windy, and wet weather. Chickadees sometimes store food in these roost sites so they won't have to venture out to forage on the coldest, most severe days.

Lots of research has been conducted on Chickadees because they are such fearless, social birds. I urge you to read further; the facts about Chickadee nesting, communication, breeding, and behavior are fascinating. Watch for them this winter, feed them if you can, and chat with them. It is easy: chick-a-dee-dee-dee!!

Book Review: *Vesper Flights*, by Helen Macdonald

It is always thrilling to read natural history that is written in vivid, magical prose and such was my experience enjoying *Vesper Flights*. Helen Macdonald is a writer's writer and her knowledge of natural history is made encyclopedic by her research and her own personal observation. In this lovely collection of essays, Ms. Macdonald reminds us that humans are no more essential or special than every other citizen of the natural world. She achieves this through science, reminiscence, philosophy, and history. Would that we all studied to know and love the natural world as well as Ms. Macdonald does, and that we all held it in as much reverence and respect.

This book will expand and deepen your connection to the world. To quote a line in the introduction of *Vesper Flights*, "Literature can teach us the qualitative texture of the world. And we need it to. We need to communicate the value of things, so that more of us might fight to save them." -GW



Thinking about the Future? Consider Planned Giving

Do you support land conservancy and want to help ensure that this work continues far into the future? If so, consider setting up a donation to OLT through your will or trust. Gifts established as part of a donor's estate planning can take a variety of forms, all of which are referred to under the rubric of "planned giving." A planned gift can enable you to make a larger contribution than would be possible during your lifetime, while helping to ensure the future viability of the organization.

The simplest way to set up a planned gift is to name OLT as a beneficiary or set up a transfer-on-death designation in your will—which can include a dollar amount or percentage of any accounts, donor-advised funds, retirement plans or life insurance policies, as well as real estate. If you have money in a pre-tax retirement plan, designating those funds as a charitable gift to a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization like OLT may make fiscal sense as part of an overall estate plan by reducing the tax burden to your heirs. There are also life income gifts that return income or other financial benefits to the donor during their lifetime.

Usually when we think about charitable giving, we are thinking about writing a check, but gifts of land are also a great way to secure OLT's future while protecting what you love. A longtime supporter of OLT recently informed us of her intention to bequeath her property to OLT on her death. OLT staff worked with the donor and her lawyer to

understand her intentions for the gift and craft appropriate language for her will. Since OLT may or may not be in a position to care for the property and its conservation values indefinitely, provision was made to place a conservation easement on the property before any future sale takes place.



Like other charitable donations, planned gifts can be directed for the organization's general operations or restricted to a purpose of the donor's choosing. As the example above illustrates, it's important to consult with the intended beneficiary of any planned gift to clarify your wishes and intentions, ensure that the beneficiary is able and willing to carry out those wishes, and ensure that the gift is set up in the best possible way to accomplish your goals. And of course, we at OLT are not legal or financial professionals! Consult with a financial adviser or the lawyer handling your estate planning to learn more about your options and make a plan to secure the future of landscape you love.

“Looking at life from a different perspective makes you realize that it’s not the deer that is crossing the road, rather it’s the road that is crossing the forest.”

- Muhammed Ali

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.

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