

The Galiano Island Stewardship News

A newsletter of the Galiano Conservancy Association, where the people of Galiano Island can share ideas, stories and perspectives on stewarding the land.



**Galiano
Conservancy
ASSOCIATION**

CELEBRATING

1989 30 2019



30th Anniversary Issue :

Milestone timeline | Reflections from the ED | Sustainable Living
Species at Risk in Your Backyard | Restoration, Learning, and Memory



30 YEARS of empowering the next generation of environmental leaders

30 YEARS of impactful conservation for the Galiano community

30 YEARS of innovative restoration and species at risk programs

... for climate mitigation, adaptation and resilience in our ecosystems and community

... for protected areas and stewarded lands that allow nature to thrive

... for those today and generations to come

In 2019 we are celebrating our 30th anniversary – an amazing milestone in our work for community conservation on Galiano! This landmark year is an opportunity to look back and celebrate achievements, and to thank all those who have made these successes a reality.

Just over 30 years ago, more than half of Galiano’s land base was owned by one forestry company. A group of concerned community members came together to protect the forest from clear-cutting for the community’s long-term benefit. As the first land trust in the Southern Gulf Islands, the Galiano Conservancy was borne of this island community’s desire to shape its own ecological future.

We envision a future where ecosystem health and human health mutually support each other in the lands and waters of Galiano Island, inspiring sustainable living on the island and beyond.

Since 1989 our programs have expanded to support conservation in several critical ways. We protect land through acquisition or covenant, to ensure intact, healthy ecosystems and connectivity for Galiano in perpetuity. We restore damaged lands because these too can contribute to a more resilient island ecology and mitigate climate change. We focus conservation projects on species at risk that need on-the-ground action to re-establish and flourish. Through our nature-based learning programs, children, youth and adults foster a love of nature, access tools to make a difference, and find mentorship and inspiration to become the next generation of environmental leaders. Programs offer hands-on learning in renewable energy, permaculture and sustainable food systems, restoration, marine and forest ecology and more.

Looking forward to the next 30 years, this is an opportunity to come together and focus our efforts on an inclusive, healthy and resilient future.

Natural Succession

By Keith Erickson

In late April 1998, as a fresh graduate of UBC’s Natural Resource Conservation Program, I set foot on Galiano Island for the very first time. I had been sitting in the office of one of my professors discussing my future, feeling somewhat afloat in the vast ocean of post graduate possibilities, when she received a phone call from the late Ken Millard.



The Galiano Conservancy was looking to hire a student for the summer to create a management plan for the Pebble Beach Reserve. She handed the phone over to me and things

fell into place... I headed over for an interview that Friday and by Monday, I was living on Galiano. Over the ensuing months, I fell in love with the island, its lands, waters and community. Twenty-one and half years later, I am the Executive Director at the Conservancy and still love and live, though now with a wife and son, in this special place.

In my time working with the GCA, what has appealed most is the general shared philosophy towards our role in nature and our approach to living with the land. Though there are a variety of ways this could be expressed (as there should be in a diverse organization), for me it was nicely summarized in the management plan for the Millard Learning Centre. Pulling from the words of Aldo Leopold and our own Eric Higgs...

“What is best for the ecosystems of the land should figure highly in any decisions. The land should be regarded as a community to which we belong that both sustains us and is sustained by us; to be honored, loved and respected. Activities on the land should bring us closer to natural processes, to ourselves and to one another.”

The GCA is proud to announce Chessi Miltner as our incoming Executive Director. Raised on Galiano, Chessi has earned his M.Sc. from McGill, is a seasoned kayak guide and business manager, and has served on the GCA Board for the past 2 years.

At the end of 2019, my time as an employee of the GCA will be coming to a close. I have mixed emotions as my love of the organization runs deep and it will be hard to step back from all the projects and programs that I have had a hand in creating. But I also need to create space for other priorities in my life, and I’ll admit that I’m looking forward to taking a break from the ongoing fundraising inherent in a charitable society that is making good things happen. What I will miss the most is the collaborative creativity and imagination that occurs when developing projects and solving problems; being able to work with and learn from amazing people on Galiano and from the wider conservation community; being inspired by my interactions with kids and young adults and witnessing their sense of discovery; and feeling the connection-to-place that comes with studying the land, working with it and helping it to heal. I say I will miss these things, but as I’m writing this I realize, with a smile on my face, that I will continue to integrate them into my life, just in a different way, in a new and yet to be defined role. Thanks to all who have made the GCA a success and to the many mentors that have helped me grow as a professional and as a human.





Land Acquisition

		Mount Sutil 1990	DL63 Cable Bay 1998	Retreat Island	Laughlin Lake 2 Private Covenants	Great Beaver Swamp	Heritage Forest 1 and 2 Covenant, Private Covenant 2005	Private Covenant 2009	Private Covenant, Millard Learning Centre & Vanilla Leaf Land Nature Reserve 2012	Private Covenant	Finlay Lake	Private Covenant			
1987	1989			1999	2000	2003		2007	2010	2013	2014	2015	2017	2018	2019
Clear-Cut Alternatives established	Galiano Conservancy Association established			Stream mapping and restoration	Nature education program begins	DL63 Cable Bay forest restoration initiated		GCA takes lead on the salmon release program with the community school	Marine species at risk conservation project initiated	First Annual Walkalong for Learning	Classroom building, off-grid solar, and campsite established at the Millard Learning Centre	Food Forest established	Nuts'a'maat Forage Forest established, restoration initiated	Renewable energy program launch and 14.35 kW grid-tied solar energy system installed at the MLC	Office, programming, and demonstration centre established at the Millard Learning Centre

Milestones





Small Island, Big Impact

Adam Huggins, Restoration Coordinator

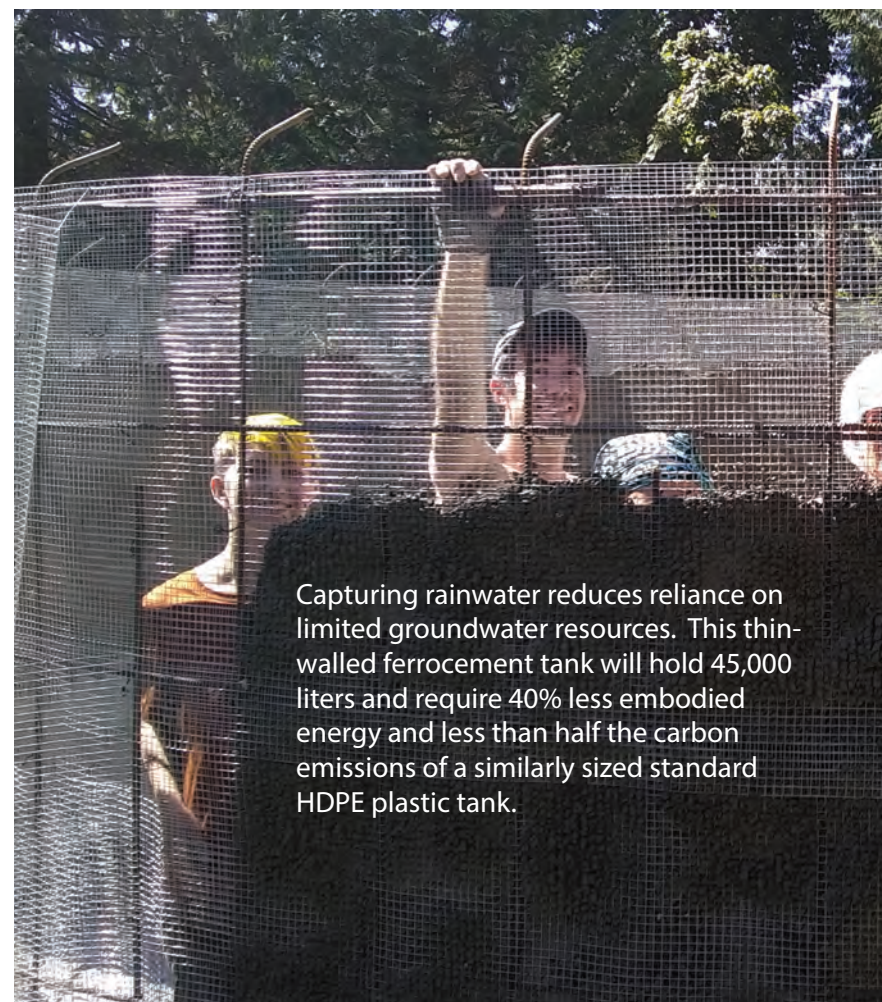
Islands have always captivated the human imagination. Biologists have long recognized the role of islands as hotbeds of evolutionary diversity. Sociologists and geographers study the uniquely resilient (and often iconoclastic) human communities that seem to spring up on islands. And as climate change begins to exert dramatic impacts upon our world, many have cast small island communities as bellwethers of change, frontline communities facing down the trials to come.

In the past, small island communities may have exhibited the insularity implied by their name. Today, we are keenly aware of the interconnectedness of the world around us, and the ephemeral, porous nature of the boundaries that would seem to define this place we call home. We do not need to pour over the hundreds of pages of the latest IPCC report on 1.5 degrees of warming to know that our summers are hotter and drier, and our winters prone to increasingly violent storms. We do not need to leaf through the recent Global Assessment Report on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services to observe that many once common species are now seldom seen, and a number – some dear and beloved, some only now attracting notice - are in danger of winking out forever. We compare these and other reports to the experiences we have of our place, and we know that we stand at a crossroads.

There are moments when it can seem hopeless – what can the residents of one small island do in the face of global changes such as these? Are small island communities, such as our own, uniquely vulnerable to forces beyond our control?

Over the past 30 years, the actions of those in our community suggest otherwise. Together, we have protected sensitive ecosystems across the island, now totaling over a quarter of our land base. We have worked to rekindle a culture of local food, and supported local producers. We have taken major steps towards a vision for 100% local solar energy production. We have pioneered innovative approaches to restoring our ecosystems, streams, and waters. We have created opportunities for thousands of students of all ages to learn from and connect with nature. We have formed relationships of mutual aid and respect with communities near and far.

Renowned agrarian philosopher Wendell Berry once asked, “What are people for?” It’s a good question, but I would argue that the question to ask in this moment is: “What can people do?” It turns out that, even on a small island, we can do quite a lot! In many ways, we are uniquely situated to demonstrate to the rest of the world what it means to live within our means as an island community, and to thrive because of, and not despite, this way of life. We have just one island, just one earth, and now is the time to take risks, make progress, and lead by example.



Capturing rainwater reduces reliance on limited groundwater resources. This thin-walled ferrocement tank will hold 45,000 liters and require 40% less embodied energy and less than half the carbon emissions of a similarly sized standard HDPE plastic tank.

DID YOU KNOW?

Canada has set ambitious goals for 2020 in response to the Aichi Biodiversity Targets and the international Convention on Biological Diversity.

The goals include:

- 17% of terrestrial ecosystems protected
- 10% of coastal and marine ecosystems protected

Progress towards the goals:

Land protected

- Global: 15% protected
- Canada: 12% protected
- British Columbia: 15% protected
- Galiano Island: 22% protected

The GCA protects over 400 hectares on Galiano Island.

Coastal and Marine area protected

- Global: 7.7%
- Canada: 14%
- British Columbia: 3.2%
- Galiano Island: ~30% in Rockfish Conservation Areas

FORESTS AND CARBON

With the Amazon rainforest experiencing the worst wildfires in a decade, the relationship between forests and carbon is more important than ever.

- 40% of Canada’s land surface is forest
- Globally, 7.5 million hectares of forest are converted for human use every year
- To put this in perspective, this is equal to:
 - 1,250 Galiano Island equivalent areas of forest lost annually
 - 0.2% of the Earth’s forest lost annually
 - 17,000 tons of carbon per year is sequestered by Galiano’s forests = the emissions for 3,500 passenger vehicles per year

GET TO KNOW THE SPECIES AT RISK IN YOUR BACKYARD

Steller Sea Lion (SC)

- The Steller Sea Lion population has declined by 80% since 1980 due to nutrition, environmental and anthropogenic factors. Dionisio Point is a critical protected area that provides winter habitat for the remaining population.

Black-tailed Deer (NR)

- The massive population of deer on our island is problematic for many plant species to grow. Studies have shown that deer grazing can be responsible for up to 50% decrease in plant species, highly affecting the diversity in Garry Oak and Douglas Fir ecosystems. To preserve plant diversity on your property, build an enclosure or take up hunting during the proper season and following government protocols.

Little Brown Myotis (E)

- The most imminent risk to bats is the White-Nose Syndrome, a deadly fungus that causes bats to wake up during hibernation and deplete their energy stores. This fungus has decimated over 94% of their populations so far. If you see any unusual bat behaviour during the winters, email info@bcbats.ca to help scientists monitor the problem.

Double-crested Cormorant

- Although they are not nationally listed, cormorants are listed as a species of special concern in British Columbia due to their declining populations in the Strait of Georgia.
- On the Ballingall islets, there were historically 28 Double-crested Cormorant nests. Due to their severe declines caused by human disturbance, there are no remaining nests, but the area remains protected as possible habitat for recolonization.

Humpback Whale (SC)

- Humpback whales were extirpated from the Salish Sea due to whaling in the late 19th and early 20th century- but after 100 years of absence from our sea, they are returning due to warmer waters causing plankton blooms and higher abundance of krill.

Southern Resident Orcas (E)/ Chinook Salmon (SC-T)

- There are only 73 individuals remaining in our Southern Resident Orca population. With a 49% chance of extinction over the next 100 years, it is crucial that we protect their main summer food source: Chinook Salmon, which last summer had the smallest run ever recorded. Stay tuned for our new Orca project and ways to get involved!

WHAT IS A SPECIES AT RISK?

A species that is at risk of disappearing due to human activities. We must pay careful attention to these species to prevent their extinction or extirpation. COSEWIC- the committee on the Status of Endangered Wildlife in Canada- classifies species at risk into six categories:

- Extinct (X) : A wildlife species that no longer exists.
- Extirpated (XT) : A wildlife species that no longer exists in the wild in Canada, but exists elsewhere.
- Endangered (E) : A wildlife species facing imminent extirpation or extinction.
- Threatened (T) : A wildlife species that is likely to become endangered if nothing is done to reverse the factors leading to its extirpation or extinction.
- Special Concern (SC) : A wildlife species that may become threatened or endangered because of a combination of biological characteristics and identified threats.
- Not At-Risk (NR): The species is not at risk of extinction.

Insects

- Insects are some of the most impacted animals by our changing world. Recent studies show that in some areas, insect populations have declined by up to 75% in the last 27 years! There are still many insect species that remain undocumented. Join iNaturalist to upload pictures of species you find and help the search efforts!

Northern Abalone (E)

Short-Tailed Albatross (T)

Western Screech Owl (T)

Great Blue Heron (SC)

Western Painted Turtle (T)

Sharptail Snake (E)

Peregrine Falcon (SC)

Red-Legged Frog (SC)

Rockfish (SC-T, species dependent)

Harbour Porpoise (SC)

Six-Gill Shark (SC)

Western Bluebird (XT)

Sea Otter (SC-XT)

Basking Shark (E)

Garry Oak Ecosystems

- Mount Sutil and Mount Galiano both boast of magical Garry Oak Ecosystems- one of the most endangered ecosystems in Canada. There is only 5% of its' historic range remaining and >100 species are listed as at-risk in this ecosystem.



Restoration, learning and memory



Eric Higgs, Professor, School of Environmental Studies,
University of Victoria Chair, GCA Development Committee

On March 1, 2019 the United Nations General Assembly declared 2021-2030 the “Decade of Ecosystem Restoration.” This is a pivotal moment for restoration, and for the planet. Those who have laboured hard on restoration projects in forests, wetlands, mangroves, savannahs, coral reefs, and so many other ecosystems can rest for a minute, just a minute. As they reflect on accomplishments, surprises and setbacks, they can recall the hard scramble of the early years not so long ago when there were no guidebooks, no instruction manuals, and just a few others to share advice.

What have we learned? That restoration is always about human actions in partnership with wild processes. That patience and ingenuity are virtues. That restoration

can help with support of human livelihood and well-being. That continuity of an ecosystem, from the past through the present to the future, matters. That humility is required lest we become convinced that ecosystems are really just organic machines (they are not). Ecosystems are changing in response to rapid human-caused climate shifts, and this is throwing off the models and ideas that produced the very idea of restoration. Restoration is having its own distinctly nervous moment, and we continue to learn.

Those who restore are not wild-eyed with hope, because they know too well the damage they confront and the complexity of trying to understand ecosystems that are, well, just too complex to know. In their persistence they find that forest structure can be recovered, slowly, or that waters can once again find historic channels, and species once lost from a place are returned.

The Galiano Conservancy Association is the same age as restoration is (the Society for Ecological Restoration was also formed in 1989). In what then must have been seen like a contrarian or slightly mad gambit, the young organization purchased the land known now as the Pebble Beach Reserve in 1998, and set out a few years later to accelerate the recovery of an industrially logged, scraped, and tree-planted site. The late restoration wizard and Conservancy co-founder, Ken Millard, remarked to Herb Hammond back then that they would not live long enough to see much of a difference in a slow growing forest ecosystem. It was one of the few things that Ken was wrong about. Keith Erickson, who contributed to those restoration efforts, walked me through the recovering forest recently, and it is beginning to look like a forest, again.

As we celebrate the 30th anniversary of the Galiano Conservancy Association remember that ambitious early work that the community came together for. The

Galiano community can be proud of the creativity and courage it took to take a badly damaged forest and begin the long process of recovery. The practice of ecological restoration is baked into the Conservancy’s identity, so much so perhaps that we forget what a radical idea it was in the 1990’s to focus energy on the lands most damaged, as well as the ones most intact. The Millard Learning Centre land embodies these values, integrating traditional land protection—one of the longest remaining stretches of old-growth Douglas fir-arbutus is conserved along the shoreline—nature-based learning and restoration. More than a half dozen restoration projects are underway, including some interwoven with food security and First Nations Traditional Ecological Knowledge and medicinal plants.

When community and learning opportunities are core aspects of restoration, healing the land can also nurture people and and in this case, build resilience for Galiano’s natural and human communities.



What do you value most about living on Galiano?

The vibrant forests, diverse wildlife or rugged coastline? Is this wild heartbeat what drew you to Galiano in the first place?

Join us in celebrating 30 years of community conservation

This year we are celebrating 30 years of community conservation. We invite you to join our diverse, multi-generational family of members. Together we value the special character of Galiano, and share a common goal of standing up for nature, for today and future generations. Much has been accomplished over the past three decades, but we need to do more in order to protect this special place and support sustainable living.

Make your gift today!

By supporting the work of the Galiano Conservancy, you become part of the protection, restoration and stewardship of Galiano's natural places, contributing to the growth of our unique program of immersive nature-based learning.

There are many ways to contribute - through a single or monthly gift, a gift in your will, a conservation covenant or a gift of land. Volunteers are always welcome.

To discover how you can get involved, contact Jennifer Stackhouse at jennifer.stackhouse@galianoconservancy.ca. We'd be happy to work with you to find the most meaningful and impactful way for you to support conservation on Galiano.



**Galiano
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ASSOCIATION

CELEBRATING

1989 **30** 2019

years

Galiano Conservancy Association
10825 Porlier Pass Road
Galiano Island, BC V0N 1P0
250-539-2424
info@galianoconservancy.ca

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