



Galiano
Conservancy
ASSOCIATION

2022-23 ACTIVITY REPORT

Prepared for 2022-2023 GCA supporters

NOTE FROM OUR E.D.

November 2023

Dear GCA supporter,

On behalf of the staff and board of the Galiano Conservancy Association, I would like to thank you for your generous contributions in 2022/2023 and for your ongoing support of our diverse activities. This report summarizes some of the Conservancy's activities and accomplishments during the past 12 months. For more highlights, statistics, and financial details of our work last year, please see the Winter 2022/23 issue of the Galiano Stewardship News, our 2022 Annual Report and our 2022 Financial Statements. All can be found online at <https://galianoconservancy.ca/publications/>

We hope you enjoy reading about the diverse projects and programs your support has helped make possible, including our environmental education programs, land acquisition campaigns, ongoing land stewardship, ecological restoration projects, native plant nursery, sustainable food systems demonstration gardens, wildlife conservation & habitat monitoring projects, and student research & internships through our mentorship program.

Please do not hesitate to get in touch with us with any questions or comments. It will be our pleasure to hear from you!

Warm regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Chessi: Miltner". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Chessi" followed by a colon and the last name "Miltner".

Chessi Miltner, Executive Director



OUR MISSION



The Galiano Conservancy Association is a community-based non-profit society, land trust and registered charity that aims to protect, steward and restore Galiano Island ecosystems by creating a network of natural areas where a healthy environment, learning and a love of nature flourish.

ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION

HELPING YOUTH RECONNECT WITH THE NATURAL WORLD

In the past 12 months, we delivered 103 days of programming to a total of 1872 participants (pre-K, K-12, post-secondary and adult). Sixty-three program days were delivered to 1239 participants from over 25 schools in the Capital Regional District (Southern Gulf Islands, Sooke, Victoria), Greater Vancouver, and Whistler.

We have continued to focus on forging deeper relationships with members of the Galiano community. Providing hands-on learning opportunities for local island youth remains a major part of our education mandate, and many of our local programs and events are organized in partnership with other Galiano organizations. Forty program days were delivered to a total of 633 (non-unique) Galiano residents which included: free pre-K "Nature Buddies" and "Beach Buddies" sessions in collaboration with the Galiano Playgroup, "Nature Summer Camp" in collaboration with the Galiano Activity Centre, "Salmon in the Classroom", "Conservancy Kids Summer Camp, one local field trip to the Millard Learning Centre, and Spring and Fall "Family Campouts" in collaboration with the Galiano Community School PAC.

Our Youth Environmental Education Bursary Fund exists to remove barriers to nature-based learning and subsidizes programs, travel, and camping-related fees for schools and youth groups in need of financial aid. 40% of K-12 participants received bursaries in 2022-23. For many of our urban bursary recipients, our programs are their first experience hiking, beachcombing or camping. In many cases these field trips are transformational and shape the way kids relate to nature for their entire lives.



LAND PROTECTION & HABITAT ACQUISITION

THE MISSING PIECE: SAVING QUADRA HILL ON GALIANO

Following our success in 2022 in partnering with Aqueduct Foundation as an interim buyer to provide temporary protection the 116-acre Quadra Hill property, we completed a baseline survey and secured funding to permanently protect this critical missing piece of the Mid-Galiano Protected Areas Network. This project was undertaken with the financial support of the Government of Canada through the Federal Department of Environment and Climate Change. Generous contributions from Sitka Foundation, Habitat Conservation Trust Foundation and anonymous donors allowed GCA to complete the acquisition. We have now reached our fundraising goal of \$1.15 million, which includes a land management endowment to ensure the forest and wetland habitats can be restored, enhanced, and stewarded in perpetuity. Your support empowered our staff to invest the time required to ambitiously pursue multiple competitive grants and major donors simultaneously; a strategy that has paid dividends as we achieved our fundraising goal without a costly public campaign. The land title was transferred to the GCA in November 2023, well within the two-year timeline committed to with Aqueduct. Thank you for your ongoing contributions, which helped GCA complete this mid-island biodiversity corridor, decades in the making!



LAND PROTECTION & HABITAT ACQUISITION

MT. SUTIL EXTENSION: PROTECTING RARE HABITAT

The GCA is delighted to announce a significant expansion of the 17.-ha. Mount Sutil Ecological Reserve on Galiano Island. Mount Sutil's delicate ecosystems have been carefully tended by GCA for 33 years to remove invasive plants and document and protect at-risk species.

Zoned for residential use but still undeveloped, this new 4 hectare waterfront property boasts diverse ecosystems like Garry oak meadows, Douglas-fir forests, and hosts numerous at-risk species such as the chocolate lily, batwing vinyl lichen, great camas, Propertius duskywing butterfly, and the common nighthawk. . In its ten-year Conservation Plan, the Islands Trust Conservancy designated the Mount Sutil area as a high conservation priority.

In 2023, the BC Parks Foundation collaborated with the GCA to acquire this property and create a land management endowment. Significant funding was also provided by Sitka Foundation and other major anonymous donors. The property is now owned by BC Parks and leased to the GCA for 99 years, with the GCA managing the expanded 21.4-ha. reserve using the endowment fund.

The commitment of our supporters has been pivotal in advancing these conservation efforts, demonstrating a shared dedication to protecting Galiano Island's precious natural heritage for future generations.



LAND STEWARDSHIP & HABITAT RESTORATION

ECOLOGICAL RESTORATION OF FORESTS, WETLANDS & MEADOWS

We are now in year 4 of the ambitious *Cedars for the Next Century* restoration project encompassing the entire Chrystal Creek watershed, and are gearing up for Phase 3 of the project, which will get underway in November and focus on the lower reaches of the creek. Phase 2, completed over the past year, involved 'rough-and-loose' decompaction treatment on 5.5 ha of degraded pasture land, with 950+ native plants established and 65 groundwater wetlands created (for a total area of 0.5 ha of open water). **Watch a timelapse video of the process on our youtube channel!** Nearly 4 tons of garbage and recycling were removed from the restoration area in the past year.

Thanks in no small part to your generous support, the Galiano Conservancy was active in the past year on much of the more than 500 ha of land we steward, removing target introduced species and implementing or planning for more ambitious restoration work like that shown below. Your support allows us to continue to be at the forefront of land restoration and stewardship initiatives in our region.



Phase 2 restoration of the MLC's Chrystal Creek Watershed

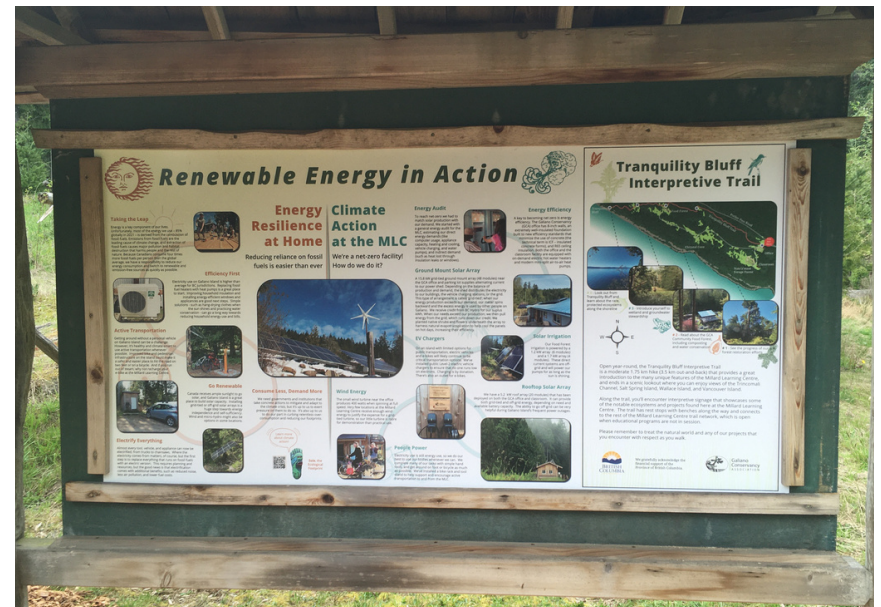


LAND STEWARDSHIP & ACCESS TO NATURE

NEW BOARDWALKS, INTERPRETIVE SIGNS, & UPGRADED CAMPING AREA

The Galiano Conservancy actively maintains over 16 km of public trails in the Mid-Island Protected Areas Network, and in the past year, added over 70 m of boardwalk and 6 interpretive signs to complete the Tranquility Bluff Interpretive Trail located at the Millard Learning Centre (MLC).

The MLC's front country camping area for visiting schools and volunteer groups received an upgrade in early 2023, with several pads rebuilt and levelled, and new tent sites constructed, including three raised wooden platforms, increasing the total number of sites to 17. This increased capacity has allowed us to more comfortably host larger school groups, and reduces the impact of campers pitching in vegetated overflow areas.



SUST. FOOD SYSTEMS & NATIVE PLANT NURSERY

GROWING FOOD & SHARING KNOWLEDGE WITH OUR COMMUNITY

The Millard Learning Centre is a living laboratory for sustainable food systems, providing the space and staff expertise to demonstrate best practices and trial new ideas, all while supplying the community with food and locally propagated plants.

Started in 2014, the GCA Food Forest is the core of our sustainable food systems program, providing a bountiful harvest of seasonal produce such as greens, herbs, edible flowers, root vegetables and berries regularly in order to supply local restaurants and community members with a diversity of locally adapted crops. Herbs are harvested, dried and packaged on site for our line of Forest Garden Tea products. The Compost Hotspot and Native & Edible Plant Nursery are located within the Food Forest compound, and together, the three provide an outdoor classroom for students interested in learning about how food is produced, food waste is recycled to soil, and plants are propagated from seed and cuttings.

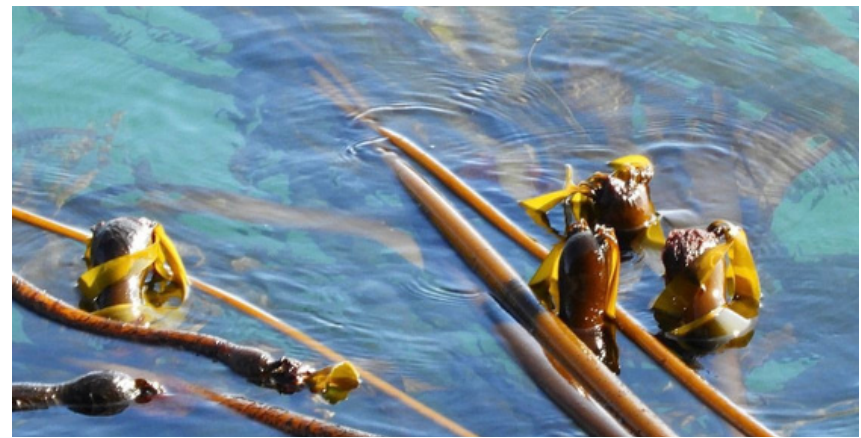


2022/23 HIGHLIGHTS:

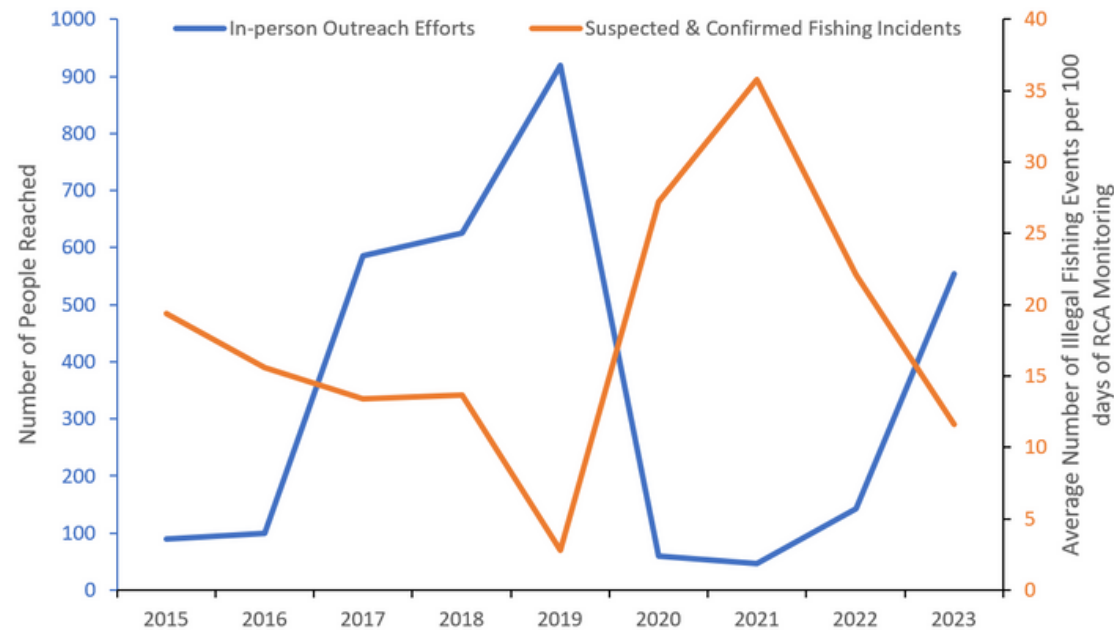
- An additional 5000 gallon cistern was added to the Food Forest's solar-powered rainwater irrigation system, increasing our resilience to droughts.
- Our Native Plant Nursery propagated over 180 different native and/or edible plant species. These plants are used as part of our ecological restoration projects, are becoming increasingly popular with our local residents, and through relationships with other conservation organizations are being used in plantings on other Gulf Islands. In total, 1,000+ plants were propagated for ecological restoration and for the community.
- 300+ people participated in workshops or other events held at the Food Forest and Native Plant Nursery. Some of these workshops include our Spring and Fall Herbal Harvest series, Compost Hotspot education, along with youth programs such as '*People, Plants and Pollinators*' and '*The Future of Food*'.
- Community volunteers contributed more than 300 hours to our Sustainable Food Systems initiatives at weekly volunteer events.

BIODIVERSITY CONSERVATION

LONG-TERM HABITAT MONITORING & SPECIES AT RISK CONSERVATION



- **Kelp Mapping Initiative:** Annual kelp monitoring was conducted for the fifth consecutive year, as part of a multi-island project involving conservation groups from Galiano, Mayne, Pender, and Saturna Islands.
- **Sentinels of Change Project:** For a 2nd year, GCA participated in this initiative spearheaded by the Hakai Institute. Communities and scientists from across the Salish Sea are studying Dungeness crab population levels and dispersal patterns using light traps to detect and count free-swimming 'megalopae' juveniles.
- **Northern Red-legged frog (*Rana aurora*) monitoring:** For a third year, population monitoring of this species of special concern was conducted at multiple wetlands at the MLC using a hydrophone to record underwater mating calls and later by counting egg masses.
- **Sharp-tailed snake (*Contia tenuis*) monitoring:** Artificial cover objects have been established at both our MLC and Mt. Sutil properties in the hopes of detecting the presence of this elusive endangered species known historically to Galiano, but not seen in over 20 years.



- **Rockfish Conservation Project:** For a ninth summer, we monitored illegal fishing activity in three Rockfish Conservation Areas (RCAs) surrounding Galiano using wildlife cameras, and conducted public outreach at events and online to increase awareness of endangered rockfish species, the impacts of bycatch, and the regulations against fishing in RCAs. After a three-year spike in illegal fishing events during the COVID pandemic, 2023 suspected fishing events decreased to the second lowest levels recorded, suggested increased community outreach post-COVID lockdowns are having the desired effect of informing recreational fishers about RCA regulations and imperiled rockfish.

BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS

FOSTERING COMMUNITY AND CONSERVATION PARTNERSHIPS

Thanks to support from funders like you, the GCA has been able to continue efforts to build enduring and meaningful relationships and partnerships with Indigenous peoples and First Nations on whose territory we work, live and play, and has also strengthened ties to other land trusts and ENGOs in the region. Ongoing and new collaborative projects include:

- **Feed the People Workshop:** In November of 2022, we hosted the fourth-annual 'Feed the People' workshop, in which Penelakut Elders and hunters harvest (hyperabundant) deer at the Millard Learning Centre and teach workshop participants how to safely and respectfully butcher, process, and preserve the harvest. The fifth annual workshop is planned for October 28/29th, 2023.
- **Land Use Consultation:** GCA staff and board representatives will be meeting with a Penelakut First Nation leadership council member to discuss how best to consult on land management and other conservation activities, both for Quadra Hill specifically, and for future projects moving forward.
- **Regional ENGO Networking:** In October 2022, we participated in the Trees to Seas Eco-Fair on Pender Island. In April 2024, GCA will host a similar EcoFair 2.0 event, with the goal to increase collaboration between neighbouring conservation organizations.
- **Land Protection through Partnerships:** While working to protect Quadra Hill, an opportunity arose to acquire 10 inaccessible acres of endangered Garry Oak bluff habitat adjacent to the GCA's Mt. Sutil Nature Sanctuary. Unable to undertake a second acquisition campaign, we reached out to the BC Parks Foundation to partner with us to protect this sensitive ecosystem. Their purchase agreement closed successfully at the end of September, and in the coming months, we will be negotiating a long-term lease agreement with BC Parks Foundation to allow us to actively steward the land as an extension of our Mt. Sutil ecological restoration activities.
- **BC Parks Partnership Agreement:** Following several contracts to manage introduced species within Galiano's provincial parks, we are now in negotiations with BC Parks to establish a formal partnership agreement that will allow us to more readily access partial funding for our ongoing Scotch Broom management initiatives in Bodega Ridge Provincial Park and other island parks.
- **Canadian Conservation Corps (CCC):** In 2023, Galiano Conservancy signed a partnership agreement with CCC to become a Service Learning Provider and host youth participants for 12-week internships (see next page for more details).



Penelakut Knowledge-Keepers - Feed the People 2022

RESEARCH MENTORSHIPS & STUDENT INTERNSHIPS

INSPIRING THE ENVIRONMENTAL LEADERS OF TOMORROW

In 2023, we continued to strengthen our University partnerships by hosting visiting groups from BCIT, UBC, and several groups from UVIC. BCIT and UBC students studying ecological restoration visited in March and assisted with planting in the expansive Phase 2 treatment area of the Cedars for the Next Century project. Two UVIC research labs used the Millard Learning Centre (MLC) for their annual retreats, and a third is likely to come in December. Other UVIC students came for a week as part of the 10th-annual ES471 Galiano Field School course offered by Prof. Higgs and focused on ecological restoration. Participants conducted five research projects designed to support and build on the GCA's restoration and conservation work on the property. Additionally, UVIC Restoration Club students volunteered with us in October during the active restoration of the Phase 2 treatment area in the Chrystal Creek watershed.

This year, we also had the pleasure of hosting three volunteer interns from Germany for between 12 and 18 weeks, one from the USA for 9 weeks, and two from Canada participating in the Canadian Conservation Corps for 12 weeks. Additionally, with support from you and other funders, we were able to offer eight paid seasonal positions (6 - 16 weeks) to talented youth at the start of their environmental careers.

Thank you for helping us to train and inspire the next generation of environmental professionals!



BCIT Fieldtrip - March 2023



UVIC Restoration Field Course - June 2023



Interns, staff & volunteers plant in restoration area

GET IN TOUCH



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Conservancy**
ASSOCIATION

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**Thank you for your ongoing
support of the GCA!**

