



THE UNDERSTORY

IN THIS ISSUE:

INVASIVE IVY

a poem

by Pete Haase

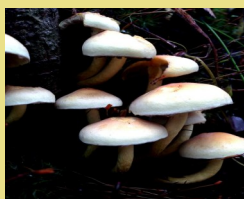
REFLECTIONS OF A NEWCOMER



STEWARDSHIP UPDATE



FUNGI, LICHEN, AND MOSS—OH MY!



INVASIVE IVY By Pete Haase

Three hour work party of volunteers seeking tangled, twisty tendrils.

There. There it is. Oh dear.

Dig, grub, pull, cut, curse. Is there no end?

Who planted this stuff?

Pile on cardboards, pull from tree trunks.

Keep heads down; don't look around – too depressing.

Just work, visit, gab, gossip, compare notes, make time pass.

Time is up.

WOW – we REALLY did a lot. Cleared MUCH space.

(When can we come again?)

Reflections of a Newcomer

by Isabel Beavers, AmeriCorps Member

In the Pacific Northwest clouds blanket the earth, hovering above the ground, creating a vast gaseous bubble behind which the sun hides and so too do the tall, snow-capped peaks of the northern Cascades and Olympic Mountains. At times, it is easy to forget that so many jagged peaks live up in the sky. Down here near the ground the world looks grey, moist, and narrow. And then, without warning, something appears on the horizon as the clouds part and drift away: a long line of milky white polygons, barely visible against the pale blue sky.

As I drove down I-5 to the Skagit Land Trust's office on my fourth day of work, the sunlight was staggering and the appearance of the Olympic peaks on the horizon caught me off guard. Usually the ride offers views that hardly extend past the outside of my car; spitting rain, or at times, huge globes of water crashing into my windshield as I whiz down the interstate. My amazement at this sight was even more abnormal. Just weeks before, the visual of high mountainous ridges lining the horizon was a constant truth. In Montana, The Bridgers, Spanish Peaks, Hyalites and Bitterroots—the dominant mountain ranges that circumvent the Gallatin Valley—become a normal and expected view. The beauty, while still evident, is muted by their daily presence. But here in the Skagit Valley, you are reminded less often of the spectacular and awesome wilderness that dominates the region.

I found myself enjoying this short spectacle, though I was sure it wouldn't last for more than a day. My breath was taken by the sight of high peaks, as it usually is, and I felt as though they had come out on this day just for me. I was immediately re-

(Continued on page 2)

WE WANT YOUR MONITORING REPORTS!

Thanks for sending us the latest news from your property!

For an electronic template, email IsabelB@skagitlandtrust.org



(Continued from page 1)

mindful of the dynamism and intensity of this new landscape, and appreciated fully each moment during which I could stare at the lonely, craggy range.

Later that day Regina, Michael, Rusty and I hopped onboard Nick Fahey's boat. We glided across the sound towards Cypress Island for an annual conservation easement monitoring visit of his property. Amazingly, by late morning there was not a cloud in the sky—the sun was blazing, the sky sizzling with blue. Nick sported a grey flannel jacket with a grey conductor hat, and stayed tucked behind the plastic box that protected the operator from the salty wind. He didn't say much as we hauled over the water; quietly relaxed he seemed to be relishing the fine weather. To the north, Mount Baker loomed, glistening with snow. To the south, the Olympic range became even more formidable as we swung nearer to it. In what felt like minutes we slid ashore a rocky beach, two donkeys in wait to greet us.

As I stepped out of the boat I felt dwarfed by the soaring trees; red cedar, Douglas fir, western hemlock and red alder, to name a few. The island felt truly enchanted and we were welcomed onto its shores where we would take a morning jaunt and spend time getting to know the intimate crevices of its topography. We tromped over moss covered grounds, stared out over rocky outcrops, and walked—in a daze—among piles of driftwood and dried bull kelp along the beach. For lunch, we returned to the cabin built by Nick's grandfather at the beginning of the 20th century. Despite modern upgrades,

the cabin held onto its turn-of-the-century charm; a large, iron stove and oven, wooden table and chairs to match, and heavily broken in wood stove, reminiscent of a simpler time. Outside the windows, green boughs hung down from trees overhead. It felt as though the structure had long been part of the earth it was built on, the air inside was as fresh as the ocean breeze, the wooden beams evocative of the forest's mystery. I could hear fairies dancing on the roof. It was magical here.

Nick's Cypress Island property is but one of many conservation easements held by Skagit Land Trust. I was

lucky enough to experience such a pristine and stunning pocket of the region during my first week in the Pacific Northwest. It does not surprise me that there are so many people like Nick, who are willing to conserve their land in perpetuity. For him, this land not only represents his family's legacy, but the forests in which he spent summers as a child, watched his children and grandchildren grow, and where he now finds solace and quietude.

“... the air inside was as fresh as the ocean breeze, the wooden beams evocative of the forest's mystery. “

When we boarded the boat to return to the mainland, I was sad to go, but invigorated by the experience; by Cypress, by the weather, by the friendly and knowledgeable people I had spent the day with. Being a newcomer in the Pacific Northwest, some of all of this still feels unfamiliar—the seemingly never-ending rain, the grey skies. But as I meet more kind and interesting people who call this place home, I gain insight into their world and why they find this place so special. 'I don't think it will take me long to fall in love with the Skagit,' I thought as glimmering Mt. Baker disappeared behind an island, our boat skipping across the bay, 'I think I am well on my way.'

STEWARDSHIP, RESTORATION, AND INVASIVE REMOVAL

We have had great success this year on Skagit Land Trust properties and none of it would have been possible without the enthusiastic support of all our volunteers and land stewards. You all make it possible for us to do the work that we do, and your efforts do not go unnoticed!

Among some of these achievements are careful stewardship of 24 Trust-owned properties, nest counts of local heronries, heron nesting season behavior monitoring, amphibian monitoring, invasive removal, restoration plantings...all supported by over 1,400 volunteer hours! Because of these tremendous efforts its clear to see that we are truly making a difference in Skagit County. So, thank you, for your contributions, hard work, and all of the time you have dedicated to the Trust and the ecological health of the Skagit!

800+ Trees Planted at the Utopia Conservation Area!

On November 1st, Skagit Land Trust partnered with Skagit Fisheries Enhancement Group and Puget Sound Energy to plant over 800 trees at the Utopia Conservation Area. Over 40 volunteers showed up from all over the county and state to plant trees in the rain! A huge THANK YOU to everyone who came out and helped us restore this beautiful conservation property!



Jim Johnson and Ned Currance



EMERSON STUDENTS GET THEIR HANDS DIRTY ON SKAGIT LANDS

On November 4th, 2013 a class of Emerson-High School students from Beverly Mowrer's Natural Resource and Community Class headed out to Lyman Slough for an educational tour, tree planting and invasive removal event. They planted around 40 trees, learned about riparian buffers and fish habitat, and liberated a stand of conifers from the grasp of morning glory.

This group plans to work on more restoration and stewardship projects with the Trust throughout the year. They are an enthusiastic and hard working bunch of kids! Stay tuned for updates on their work in our monthly e-mails and on our Facebook page.



Emerson students planting at Lyman Slough, group photo below.



SAMISH ISLAND IVY PULL: A GREAT SUCCESS

Pictured above, Peter Haase, Anne Middleton, Isabel Beavers, Jack Middleton, Jessica Lee and Norith Saint-Pierre after pulling piles and piles of ivy. The one pictured was but one of five gigantic piles. Our heron friends will be very happy that another part of their forest has been released from the grip of English Ivy! Look for the announcements of more ivy pulls at the Samish-Squires Heronry in our upcoming e-mails.



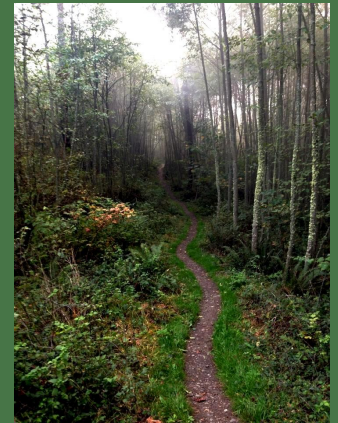
Words, Sounds and Stewardship

I asked Michael Kirshenbaum, Stewardship Director, to reflect on the year in light of our recent event “Words, Sounds and Images of the Skagit”. A strong sense of place is one thing that connects many of us to the Skagit Valley, motivates land trust staff and volunteers to continue working year after year, and makes the successes of Skagit Land Trust so meaningful to the community. As the year comes to a close we are all counting our conservation blessings. We asked you all to tell us which places in the Skagit you find special and in need of protection this year, but now I urge you to consider: which of the land trust’s already protected lands you are most thankful for?

Though Skagit Land Trust looks to the future as we revise our Conservation Strategy for the next decade, it’s easy to forget about the changed ground we’re standing upon. Discussion and dreaming often focus on the next acquisition that will help make this place we all love a little better, a little more protected. Forward momentum is how the land trust community has been able to pursue the vision that has led to the protection of over 6,000 very special acres in Skagit County. But if we can slow down for a minute, and look back for a second at our wonderful conservation areas, we see that the hard work and dedication of land stewards, volunteers, donors, members, staff and many others has changed our sense of place right under our feet—and for the better.

Take a look at the 110-acre Day Creek-Kosbab Conservation Area upon acquisition in 2003 and you’ll see a pattern of geometric potato fields hard upon the salmon-rich waters of the Skagit; look again in 2013 and you’ll see a riot of conifers, willows and nary a straight line on the property—helped along by industrious beavers and tromping elk. A few years ago, only a select few knew the way to the top of Guemes Mountain, or what could

have become Guemes Mountain Estates. Now, a beloved trail ushers thousands a year to one of the best views in Skagit County, protected forever. And it’s not just what we do, but what we prevent from happening: the forests of Cumberland Creek, Hurn Field, Samish-Ochs, Grandy Creek – and many others – thrive, mature and are watchfully protected from poachers. Our marked boundaries and green-and-white land trust signs not only stake a conservation claim on a property, but let people know these treasured lands are being cared for.



GUEMES MT. TRAIL

As a result, how many children and adults walk land trust property on trails, stumble along a gravel bar, or take in the stirring view of open meadows, wetlands and forests as they drive by? Let’s keep dreaming forward, but also take a look back every so often and remember that what is, might not have been.

SLT CONSERVATION AREAS AND THEIR LAND STEWARDS

Barney Lake: Tim Manns & Brenda Cunningham

Barr Creek: Russ Dalton

Butler Creek: Jim Owens

Cumberland Creek: Jim Johnson

Day Creek (Berquist & Forest): Stan Zyskowski

Day Creek Kosbab: Jim Fukuyama

Day Creek Slough: Hal Lee

Grandy Creek: John Freeman

Green Road Marsh: Heidi Nichols

Guemes Mountain: Ed & Carolyn Gastellum, Ian Woofenden, Kit Harma

Hurn Field: Steffany Raynes & Lin Skavdahl

Lyman Slough: Dick Raisler

March’s Point: LaVerne & Jim Scheltens

Minkler Lake: Hal Lee

Mud Lake: Lloyd Brown

Pressentin Ranch: Bill & Sally Pfeifer

Samish—Ochs: Pete Haase

Samish River: OPEN!

Samish-Squires: Jack Anne Middleton

Sumner Lake: Tami Thomas and Tom Mayes

Topo Ryan: John Day

Utopia: Ned Curran





From the Forest

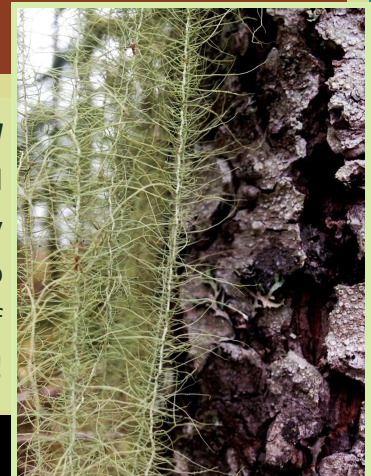


Beaded Bone Lichen, *Hypogymnia enteromorpha*

This hanging leaf lichen commonly grows in open and shady forests on conifers in all elevations. We spotted this one growing amongst some Lungwort on a Trust-assisted property. It is identified by its hollow lobes with dark interiors, lobe constrictions, and hanging growth pattern.

Methuselah's Beard, *Usnea longissima*

Methuselah's Beard is a hanging hair lichen most easily identified by its white central cord and wispy lateral branchlets. It is one of the longest lichens in the world, is very sensitive to air pollution and has strict habitat requirements—all of which contribute to its listing as a Priority Species by WA State DNR! We stumbled across a huge stand of this whimsical lichen on a Trust-assisted property!



Fly Agaric, *Amanita muscaria var. formosa*

A beautiful but poisonous mushroom! Can be found on the forest floor of mixed deciduous and coniferous forests. You may see it alone, in a group, or in a fairy ring. A different variety than its close relative *Amanita muscaria var. muscaria*, which is red. The amanita genus is known for having some of the most toxic and psychoactive mushrooms, due to the chemical alpha-amanitin. Look, but don't touch!



Lungwort, *Lobaria pulmonaria*

This loosely attached leaf lichen with a rhyming Latin name is found mostly in humid forests of low elevation. It was used by doctors long ago to heal pulmonary sicknesses, due to its affinity to the human lung. Modern research suggests it does in fact contain healing properties!





OUR MISSION:

Skagit Land Trust conserves wildlife habitat, wetlands, agricultural and forest lands, scenic open space and shorelines for the benefit of our community and as a legacy for future generations.

UPCOMING EVENTS AT SKAGIT LAND TRUST

JANUARY 25TH

Invasive Removal at the Anacortes Mehler Easement

FEBRUARY 22

Tree Planting at Lyman Slough

MARCH 9

Tree Planting at Minkler Lake

MARCH, APRIL AND JUNE -

Amphibian Monitoring!

VISIT: WWW.SKAGITLANDTRUST.ORG FOR MORE INFO!