



GaLTt Newsletter Report on 2022

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Swift family photo: Islands Trust Conservancy

Don Ewing, Hally Swift, Ted Swift, Betty Swift, Barbara Swift, and Eric Strandberg.

Link Island: Protected Forever

Betty Swift had a dream—and she and her family made it come true. In 1963 the Swift family purchased Link Island, between Decourcy and Mudge Islands. Betty and her husband Ward built a cabin, but this was much more than a beloved family vacation property. They were devoted to protecting the health and biodiversity of Link Island's natural ecosystem. They shared their strong land ethic with their children Barbara, Ted, and Hally, and experienced a lifetime of joy living with Link's natural beauty and rhythms. The family devoted countless hours over 60 summers stewarding and restoring its native habitat, keeping invasive plants at bay.

To ensure its long-term protection, in 2018 Betty placed a conservation covenant on most of the island under the **Natural Area Protection Tax Exemption Program (NAPTEP)**. Only five of its 53 acres (19.3 ha) remained outside the covenant, reserved for the family's use. That covenant was co-held by Islands Trust Conservancy (ITC) and the Nanaimo & Area Land Trust (NALT). As Betty wished, upon her death in 2021, Link Island was donated to ITC and a new conservation covenant was placed over the entire

island—a process completed in April 2022. Under the terms of transfer, only existing named members of the Swift family (Betty's children and grandchildren) may continue to use the cabin and island during their lifetimes. The island remains closed to the public, providing sanctuary to the rare and threatened ecosystems and species that reside here. ITC is developing a Link Island management plan, which includes First Nations engagement.

GaLTt's expanding conservation role

When Link's ownership was transferred to ITC, NALT invited GaLTt to join them as co-covenant holder. Although GaLTt already held two covenants on Gabriola Island and managed a third on behalf of American Friends of Canadian Conservation, adding the Link Island covenant required us to legally expand the area within which we could hold covenants to include all of the islands in the Gabriola Island Trust Area. We thank lawyer John Manning for his pro bono services in this change. The Link Island covenant is also an Eco-gift under the federal **Ecological Gifts Program**—another first for GaLTt. ... [Read more on our website.](#)

CONSERVATION INITIATIVES

GaLTT has several important conservation programs and initiatives that enable Gabriola's landholders to contribute to the protection of our natural environment. Most of Gabriola is in private hands, so it is up to us to protect our green space. On November 17, at GAC Hall Gabriolans learned how to help. Ken Gurr described the **Nature Stewards** program which advises and helps you to green YOUR property, preserving and restoring the natural landscape and habitats. Anne Landry explained the value of **conservation covenants** and how they work to protect natural landscapes and habitat in perpetuity. Bill Pope explained what **legacy giving** is—the how and the why.

Nature Stewards

GaLTT's Nature Stewards campaign asks all of us to do our best to conserve and let nature flourish on at least 30% of our acreage. Ken Gurr reported at the start of 2023 we already have 75 participants in the program—private Gabriola landholders who have pledged to preserve in its natural state a total of about 140 acres of Gabriolan land. Another dozen are waiting for a personal consultation to discover how they can protect a portion of their land.

Conservation goals in BC Parks

In a March 14 Zoom presentation, Erica McLaren, Conservation Specialist, and Katy Fulton, Conservation Coordinator, West Coast Parks, who have worked closely with GaLTT on many park projects, outlined conservation goals for our provincial parks and the role that GaLTT volunteers play in achieving them.

Education

Conservation education was an important focus this year. **Carol McDougall** gave a workshop on using the iNaturalist app to inventory Gabriola species and **Andy McKinnon** taught our Nature Stewards about ecosystems.



SFU/Snuneymuxw Syath: Living History & Culture

Collaborations with SFU/Snuneymuxw Syath Project explored indigenous understandings about ecosystems this year. A Wildcrafting workshop in May with **Kim Recalma-Clutesi** (Kwagiulth/Pentlatch) and **Dr. Nancy Turner** highlighted Coast Salish teachings and knowledge.



In his first SFU/SS GaLTT-sponsored presentation about the Healing Canoe Project at the Gabriola Elementary School, **Beau Wagner**, artist and carver, shared the teachings (*snawayalh*) of his Stzuminus master teacher/carver, teachings around our connections to wood and the wilderness, and teachings about life and our relationships to all living things. GaLTT members were delighted to attend two subsequent community events bringing this wonderful project to fruition: a canoe steaming ceremony at the Commons and the official launch on Friday, May 20 at Twin Beaches, where Beau reflected on the carving process and revealed the canoe's name: "xwcuni:lucun" ("close together," the Hul'qumi'num name for Twin Beaches).



Art Shows for GaLTT—THANK YOU!

Doug Harrison held an art show and sale in his and Marie's beautiful, waterfront garden on June 25/26. All proceeds from sale of Doug's original work, prints and cards were donated to GaLTT to further our conservation efforts. The paintings are a living historical testament of the old logging practices in the Alberni valley, where he was raised amongst steam trains and steam donkeys in the woods. Every picture has a story, pulled from his memories. He especially loves old wooden boats; seiners, trollers, and tugs, as works of art in their own right, representing a culture long lost.

Another lovely art show, this one by **Melinda Wilde**, invited us to "take a refreshing walk through the forests of Gabriola"—Melinda donated 10% of original work sales from her show to GaLTT and even named one of her paintings after GaLTT!



GUIDED + SELF-GUIDED WALKS

We kept you walking through 2022...

In the winter of 2021-22, when we were still resisting group activities because of Covid, we continued our organized self-guided **Winter Walkabout** series, this time to view special trees. Participants could pick up a trail journal at North Road Sports and if they completed at least seven walks could enter their journal to win one of three prizes. Trailheads were marked with painted rocks (thank you GES students!) and routes with ribbons, later removed. The first walk took us to view mature arbutus and big-leaf maple trees in Cox Community Park and Descanso Bay Regional Park. Walk 2 explored the Drumbeg Park Garry oak ecosystem with views toward Saturnina, Breakwater and Valdes islands. Other walks looked at entwined trees; big trees with resting benches; big trees and views at Gabriola Sands; the Sandwell Park cliff forest ecosystem; mixed new growth and mature forest in the Federal lands held for the Snuneymuxw First Nation; and the cliff walk from Whalebone beach to the waterfall. We also sent you forest bathing in S'uł-hween X'pey Nature Reserve.

At the other end of the year in the winter of 2022/3 we resumed our guided group walks based on our trail map's **ABC trail walks**, kicking off in November with Route U starting up behind Surf Lodge. Our December walk had to be postponed due to weather, but the series continues in 2023.

End to End: Descanso Campground to Page's Marina

In September, 55 walkers met near Taylor Bay for a 10 am start to our annual trek. We finished around 3:45 pm at Page's Resort and Marina on Silva Bay, where we could buy a drink or ice cream at the marina store and revel in the satisfaction of having walked the length of the island, mostly on public trails—an early GaLTt goal. Gertie was there to shuttle people to their cars or drop them off along North and South road.

Forest Therapy Walking

On a beautiful October afternoon in Cox Park, our forest therapy guide **Janice Furevick** helped us to make a deeper connection with the forest. We used our senses to see, feel, touch, and smell the forest while emptying our mind of its busy thoughts.



INVASIVE SPECIES

Daphne

Daphne work parties started up in January in Sir Williams and St. Catherines neighbourhood near Drumbeg, continuing around the island through March to prevent seed-setting.

Broom

On the final damp Sunday afternoon in April volunteers from Gabriola Lions Club and GaLTt worked in Drumbeg Park meadow to cut the early-flowering broom. Throughout May and June, weekly broombashes were scheduled all around Gabriola.



Ecosystem Restoration

Just removing invasives doesn't fix an ecosystem—you have to restore biodiversity.

Drumbeg Park

For two years we've seeded & planted a variety of native plants in four trial restoration sites on previously cleared Drumbeg meadows. In 2020-21 and 2021-22 grants from the

BC Park Enhancement Fund supported this work, and we were delighted to receive a new grant for a 2022-23 project. Working again with **Kristen Miskelly** from Satinflower Nurseries, we seeded/planted native annuals and perennials (supplied by the nursery) to expand the restoration sites. Work parties in September and October prepared the new planting areas and a total of 200 plugs, corms and bulbs of yarrow, woolly sunflower, fool's onion, and camas were planted in late October, followed by seeding in November. In spring 2022 we also installed two signs in the meadow restoration areas to explain the work we have been doing there.

Queeqeg CP

After all the work our volunteers did in 2021 clearing daphne from Queeqeg Community Park and adjoining trails, we moved to Step 2, Restoration, the next stage in preventing the daphne from re-establishing. In February 2022 volunteers prepared the site by cutting re-sprouted daphne, and then planted 100 native shrubs supplied by the Regional District of Nanaimo.

NATIVE PLANT DEPOT

If you are clearing land please think of us and contact programs@galtt.ca. Our plant rescue team recovers native species for free distribution via our Native Plant Depot at the Commons. The Depot is wildly successful—we can't keep plants in stock!

TRAILS

Our trails crew have been busy beyond regular maintenance and tree-fall clearance. They've done lots of important construction work such as the new boardwalk in Robinson Woods (shown right).



On the McRae covenant some creative thinking solved the problem of how to install free-standing signs! And the crew also repaired a whole bridge on the Elgie Trail, washed out by winter flooding.

IN THE PUBLIC EYE

We've been busy with submissions on matters of public interest.

- **Joint response to Islands Trust (IT) policy review:** GaLTT and Mayne Island Conservancy took the lead in developing a response signed by 11 of the 12 Gulf Island conservancies.
- **Letter to editor (Sounder News)** re shoreline accesses.
- **707 Fuel Management Plan (FMP) submission:** GaLTT submitted a comprehensive review identifying several specific concerns about the negative impacts the FMP would have on the ecological health and diversity of the treated areas were it to be implemented as described.
- **Rob Brockley Interview** with Shauna Doll of the Raincoast Conservation Foundation on the importance of collective action to maintain unfragmented natural ecosystems.



VOLUNTEER APPRECIATION

GaLTT's many successes are due entirely to our volunteers. THANK YOU! On Sept 25 the Invasive Species Committee held an Appreciation Event at Queequeg Community Park. It was attended by thirty-two of the volunteers who have joined GaLTT invasives removal work-parties or organized their own in their neighbourhoods. We enjoyed the wonderful spread (including delicious cheese and onion scones from Ground Up Café), chatted, and learned more about the replanting work done in the park earlier in the year.



S'UL-HWEEN X'PEY SIGN

Designed by Snuneymuxw First Nation artist **Eliot White-Hall**, installed by GaLTT volunteers. It was

Eliot's great-grandmother, Snuneymuxw linguist and Elder Dr. Ellen White who honoured this special place with its Hul'qumi'num name. Snuneymuxw Elder Geraldine Manson says, "Eliot's art helps to tell the powerful stories of the history of this place."

ACCESSIBILITY

We're still here and working hard! On public lands there are lots of time-consuming regulatory hoops to be jumped through before any improvements can be made, but our Accessibility Committee continues to work behind the scenes to improve access to public spaces for those with mobility challenges.

DIGITAL COMMUNICATIONS

New website and enhanced Facebook pages

Our beautiful new website went live (thanks Nola!) on January 3, 2022, replacing the tired decade-old site. It has a jazzy news blog and events calendar, and additional pages about Gabriola's ocean foreshore and information resources.

At the end of the year, GaLTT contracted with whiz kid Paula Brent to up our email and social media game and enhance the community's awareness of and involvement in what we are doing. Welcome aboard Paula—and thanks for all your previous volunteer hours and advice!

WE'RE ALWAYS LOOKING FOR VOLUNTEERS!

Please join any of GaLTT's working committees and bring your skills and energy to help with our work. Email info@galtt.ca and we'll put you in contact with the right group for your interests. We have projects of all kinds—see the website **Committees** page. There's a place for everyone, and it's a great way to get involved.

To volunteer on our two busiest committees, contact trailwork@galtt.ca or invasives@galtt.ca

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