



2025 ANNUAL NEWSLETTER: a busy year for GaLTT!

MARCH 2026

2025 AGM and Executive

Our March 2025 AGM had an at-capacity turnout and the presentation on **“Rewilding Your Property”** was very well received—we are grateful for islanders’ strong interest in preserving and enhancing native habitat and biodiversity. After the AGM, **Sarah Kopjar** took over as GaLTT President from Hugh Skinner.

Membership

At the end of 2025 (and after a very successful March membership drive) we had 418 memberships, some joint, representing over 600 individuals. We launched a new membership management platform (Keela) which allows for better data tracking, integration with donor management and increased automation. We have now discontinued 5 year memberships going forward; previous 5 year memberships will of course be honoured.

Membership remains an important part of our annual income! If you have friends or family who use the trails or appreciate GaLTT's conservation work and community outreach please encourage them to become a member or consider purchasing a membership in their name as a gift.



Community Engagement

Among other things, Community Engagement means trail walks! CE ran 6 guided community **Winter Walks** at the beginning of the year, exploring the “Neighbourhood Pathways” that connect our community. Our annual 17 km **End to End Walk** on June 7th (BC Trails Day), this year from Silva Bay to the Haven, brought out 70 walkers. During the winter and spring, CE worked with the grade 6/7 class at the school to encourage them to use the trails and prepare them to complete their own End to End Walk on June 16th.

Our popular **Stroll and Sip** series (four guided walks) returned for the summer of '25. For each event we met at 4pm for an hour long walk that began and ended at a venue where people could stay for a drink or meal after to socialize with their fellow walkers:

Ravenskill Orchards, The Surf, the Gabriola Golf Course, and The Haven.

From the May long-weekend to Thanksgiving we had volunteers at a table at the **Saturday market**, a wonderful opportunity to connect with visitors and Gabriolans. Many people stopped by to ask questions about the trails, invasive plants and native plants, or admire the new GaLTT t-shirts sported by volunteers.

In April, CE worked with Habitat Restoration to organize an **Earth Day Invasives Blitz** encouraging islanders to remove invasive plant species on their properties and in their neighbourhoods. We supplied buckets of loppers and worked with several groups (like the Fellowship Church on Church Road) to organize work parties. Now if you drive along Church Road you will see native plants flourishing on the road side instead of broom. There were also neighbourhood work parties in Whalebone, Islands View, Malaspina, Coats and McConvey. Camp Miriam summer campers continued their annual invasives work in July and August.

At the **Community Volunteer** open house on November 8, we engaged with 25 people about getting involved in GaLTT, not only at work parties but at the committee level.

Community Engagement is currently looking for a new chair person—please contact us if you can help!



Conservation: committee restructuring

2025 saw some changes to committees operating under the conservation umbrella:

- The Conservation Committee became the **Covenant and Land Acquisition Committee**;
- The Invasive Species Committee became the **Habitat Restoration Committee**;
- Creation of **Nature Stewards Committee** (from Nature Stewards program);
- **Native Plant Depot** moved under Nature Stewards management.



Invasive Species/Habitat Restoration

In late 2025 the Invasive Species Committee changed its name to **Habitat Restoration Committee**, to better reflect its activities. GaLTT originally began this kind of work by pulling broom at Drumbeg and later expanded to working in other public spaces, removing daphne, tansy ragwort and other invasive plants. But over the years the work of the committee has slowly grown to include far more, because it is sometimes necessary to do more than pull invasives to help re-establish native vegetation and improve wildlife habitat. So while invasives removal remains important, the new name reflects the fact that this is just part of the broader project of habitat restoration.

We started the year by distributing our new **Invasive Plants pamphlet** to all Gabriola mailboxes. In response, the Morrell Nature Sanctuary asked for copies and the Gabriola Garden Club invited us to speak about an “**Invasive Plant of the Month**” at their meetings, highlighting problem plants common on Gabriola and offering advice on how to deal with them. It’s wonderful to have such positive feedback!

Since our work-parties now stick to parks and trails, we encourage Gabriolans to get together to tackle invasive plants in their own neighbourhood. In 2025 we launched our first annual **Earth Day Invasives Blitz**, organized jointly with Community Engagement, conveniently followed by a **yard waste drop-off** event organised by the Gabriola Volunteer Fire Department, where people could dispose of invasive plants.

Restoration work at Drumbeg continued in the Fall, when we planted over a thousand plugs of native flowering plants and grasses, with the support of BC Parks. Several planting sessions were held, involving a total of 24 adult volunteers, as well as a group of 27 Grade 7 students from Gabriola Elementary School.

Covenant and Land Acquisition

CLAC works primarily behind the scenes, with responsibility for monitoring our **5 conservation covenants**: Link Island, Elder Cedar, Bachman, Koontz, and Robinson Woods. The committee also focuses on **advocacy** for conservation, for example by providing [feedback on the Islands Trust draft Policy Statement](#) that highlighted the critical importance of protecting Trust Area ecosystems.



This committee also seeks opportunities to acquire undeveloped lands with high conservation values in order to increase the amount of protected area within the Gabriola Trust Area, the most recent example being our contribution of funds for the RDN's purchase of **Wilkinson Woods** in 2024.

In early 2022 GaLTT partnered with the Gabriola Island Memorial Society (GIMS) in an effort to convince the Ministry of Transportation and Transit (MOTT) to relinquish control of the undeveloped 40-acre parcel of Crown land known locally as **Honeysuckle Woods**, so that it is never used for gravel extraction. Our hope was that subsequent formal consultations between the provincial government and the Snuneymuxw First Nation would consider our request that the land be protected in perpetuity as public parkland and a much-needed community green burial site. Sadly, despite four years of effort, GaLTT was recently informed by our local MLA that MOTT will not reconsider their decision to

retain the land and its resources for future use on infrastructure projects on Gabriola and other nearby islands. We are very disappointed with the decision and continues to believe that long-term protection of Honeysuckle Woods is in the best interests of the Gabriola community.

Nature Stewards

The Nature Stewards program, initiated in 2021 to provide an informal, voluntary way for landowners to pledge to conserve 30% of their property to support native species, became a standalone committee in 2025, transitioning from a contracted coordinator to a volunteer. Eleven volunteers carry out property visits.

In 2025, 16 properties became Nature Stewards, voluntarily protecting 42.7 acres. This brought us to a total of **121 properties voluntarily conserving 380 acres**. There are also **12 wildlife friendly gardens**.

The **Nature Stewards Open House** at the end of May saw about 40 visitors explore the Brockleys' garden, which shows how gardens can rewild naturally under the right conditions. In November, committee chair Lou Skinner was a speaker for an Islands Trust webinar titled '**Species at Risk and what Land Holders can do to Conserve Habitat**'.



Ken Gurr, who initiated the Nature Steward program, completed a three year grant from the regional district of Nanaimo. Over the course of the term, he spoke to landowners in significant watersheds about stewarding riparian areas and culminated with a **restoration project at the Gabriola Golf Course**.

Trails

Trail maintenance projects in 2025 included trail trimming, building or rebuilding boardwalks and adding metal mesh to prevent slipping, and clearing fallen trees and trail drainage ditches. We maintain trails on trail licences in cooperation with landholders (for example we replaced mesh on the Commons boardwalk this year) and on public lands in cooperation with responsible agencies (e.g. S'ulhween X'pey/Elder Cedar, Joyce Lockwood Community Park area, and in the 707, where we also began to replace disintegrating signposts.

Working jointly with the Accessibility Committee, Trails volunteers began work at Gabriola Sands Provincial Park to improve the condition of the road behind the Vehicle Access Gate on the Taylor Bay side, to improve conditions for park visitors in the winter, especially for those using walkers or strollers.



Accessibility

Apart from the work at Gabriola Sands, behind the scenes this committee advocates for improved beach access, and we eagerly await the results of the Descanso Bay Regional Park Accessible Beach Access Feasibility Study. Beach access in general continues to be a high priority for Gabriolans and GaLTT receives monthly requests for improved access. We continue to search for a viable option.

We are working with PHC and their seniors program to identify the easier walking trails and places with benches for resting. Last April another commemorative bench was installed at the end of Taylor Bay Road overlooking the bay.

Wider collaboration

We're used to hearing from locals about our work, but every once in a while, we get a surprise in the form of feedback from someone who lives far away. This year a volunteer with the Newport Student Conservation Association in the US contacted us to let us know that our Conservation Resources page has been a great help to them in their work with young people. We've also been contacted by the Yellow Point Ecological Society (YES), who are beginning some important survey work in Hemer Provincial Park to protect grassland habitat and have asked us for input on best practices for ecosystem recovery. We are so glad to be able to support other organizations—collaboration really is critical when doing conservation work.

