



NEWS FROM NALT

(Nanaimo Area Land Trust)

Newsletter of the Nanaimo & Area Land Stewards Society

June, 2004

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THE COALITION TO SAVE MOUNT BENSON

There is growing concern about the future of Nanaimo's Mount Benson (see *News from NALT*, April 2004), as logging has begun and a future residential development on the mountain is planned by the owners. As a result of this concern, a campaign has been launched by the newly formed *Coalition to Save Mount Benson*. The *Coalition* is an informal affiliation of local and regional groups, businesses and individuals who became motivated to "do something" when new patches of clear-cuts began showing up along the front face of Mt. Benson this spring.

The goals of the present campaign are:

to work with all government levels, and with the owners of all properties on the north-east face (the 'front') of Mt. Benson, to (a) find an alternative solution to further logging, and (b) develop a long-term plan to preserve the front face of the mountain for recreational, ecological and aesthetic values.

(Continued on page 3)

NALT ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

The Annual General Meeting of the *Nanaimo & Area Land Stewards Society* will be held on:

Tuesday, June 22nd, 7:00pm
at the

Bowen Park Complex, Activity Room #1.

Special Guest Speakers: The Honourable Judith Reid, MLA, Nanaimo-Parksville, and City of Nanaimo representatives (TBA)

Program: Launch of Linley Valley Campaign Phase II
AGM Business: Amendment of NALT Bylaws and Election of new Directors.

Everyone Welcome

For more information, call the NALT Stewardship Centre at 714-1990.

NEWS FROM NALT

is published three or four times
a year by the
Nanaimo Area Land Trust

NALT's Mission is:

*to preserve and foster the
stewardship of areas of natural
beauty, valuable wildlife
habitat and green space in the
Nanaimo region*

The Nanaimo and Area
Land Stewards Society
was registered as a B.C. Society
in 1995, and subsequently was
granted charitable tax status
and the right to hold
conservation covenants.

Executive Director: Gail Adrienne

Office Manager: Cyndy Jefferies

Board of Directors:

Gillian Butler
Holly Blackburn
Dean Gaudry (co-chair)
Barbara Hourston (co-chair)
Ralph Hutchinson
Ken Lyall (newsletter editor)
Mike Mann (treasurer)
Harriet Rueggeberg
Ron Tanasichuk

Contact us at:

The Nanaimo Area Land Trust
Stewardship Centre
Madrona Building, Suite 8,
140 Wallace Street (rear)
Nanaimo, B.C. V9R 5B1

(250) 714-1990

admin@nalt.bc.ca

www.nalt.bc.ca

FOURTH ANNUAL VAN KERKOERLE SUMMER PICNIC AND CELEBRATION

SUNDAY, JULY 18th, 2004

12:00 noon 'til 4:00 pm

at the Van Kerkoerle property in Cassidy

3145 Frost Road, off Spruston Road

**Follow the signs and red balloons from the Island Highway
at the Haslam Creek bridge
(just before the airport, heading south)**

***This year's Picnic Lunch will once again feature a
Tantalizing Menu:***

**barbecue n' bun, veggie & fruit finger-foods, assorted desserts, and
hot & cold beverages**

Activities of the Day will Include:

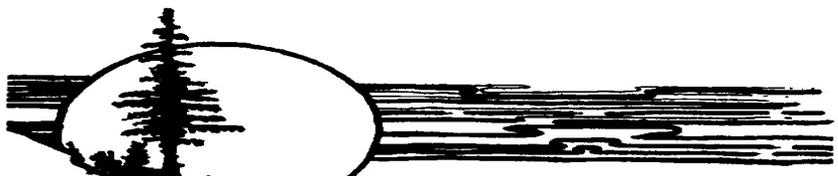
**guided walks of the woods and Peter's arboretum,
a dowsing demonstration, live music, NALT information,
a raffle featuring original works of art, and more....**

We hope that you can join us for this NALT tradition; See You There!

KATIMAVIK VOLUNTEERS ON THE MOVE

The second group of Katimavik volunteers has now left Nanaimo after a nine-week stay; by now they are experiencing a remote community in the Northwest Territories - and millions of mosquitoes! The next group of eight Katimavik youths will arrive in Nanaimo on June 9th, coming from a 9-week stay in Quebec. NALT will once again be serving as a job host until mid-August. They will be working with our summer students Greg and Katie, either at the plant nursery or in Linley Valley.

Billets needed: We will be needing volunteers to billet one or two Katimavik volunteers from July 9th to 18th. If you can help with this, please call the NALT office. The Katimavik program will provide \$10/day to subsidize billeting costs.



Coalition to save Mt. Benson (Continued from page 1)

To date, the Coalition includes the Runners of Compassion, the Tuesday and Thursday Hikers groups, Frontrunners, Tracks Outdoor Adventures, Westwood Lake Neighbourhood Group, the Neighbours of Benson View Road, and the Nanaimo Area Land Trust. The Coalition is hoping to attract other affiliates as the campaign progresses. NALT has agreed to take on the administrative role for the Coalition, and a fund-raising strategy is being developed. A *Declaration of Support* sign-up sheet has been produced, and the ambitious goal is to collect 10,000 signatures by July 31st (see following box).

On Friday, May 28th, the Coalition had a very positive meeting with MLA Mike Hunter, and a presentation to the RDN Board is scheduled for June 22nd, to seek support from that government level. A presentation to Nanaimo City Council is likely in July, and a meeting with Weyerhaeuser representatives is expected in the near future.

On Saturday, June 5th, members of the *Coalition* set up a display at the *Gut Buster Run* at Westwood Lake Park and distributed handout information about the mountain and the campaign.

SIGN UP TO SUPPORT MOUNT BENSON CAMPAIGN

The *Coalition to Save Mount Benson* is seeking feedback, ideas, and expressions of support for this initiative. If the future of this Mountain is important to you, call the NALT Stewardship Centre at 714-1990, or email at admin@nalt.bc.ca

The Mount Benson *Declaration of Support* sheets are at several locations around Nanaimo, including the NALT Stewardship Centre, Green Communities in Port Place, Howard Johnson Harbourside, Dr. Savoie's dentistry office in Terminal Park, Tourism Nanaimo at Beban Park, and Frontrunner's and Island Natural in north Nanaimo.

FROM OUR READERS

NALT would like to hear from you. Send us your comments, complaints, or stories.

Many weeks ago, we noticed a red breasted sapsucker having a go at our weeping willow tree. It allowed us to approach quite closely and watch, as it pecked perfect drill holes. Before long we realized we were watching not one, but two little woodpeckers working furiously away. Soon the sap was filling the holes and it was fun to see who else was attracted to our tree. Most interesting were the comma butterflies, six of them one day, enjoying the feast. At some point the birds stopped creating new holes and began reaping the harvest, spending much of the day feeding on the insects attracted to the sweet sap. Keeping our eye on their flights to and fro we soon discovered base camp on another willow, not a hundred yards away. Thirty feet up we spotted a perfectly round hole, strategically placed under a shelf fungus, which acted like a little roof. About ten days ago we observed that the birds seemed more nervous and hurried, and we noticed that they were keeping the bugs in their bills and flying off. We knew then that their chicks had hatched! Sure enough, we can now hear those little birds loudly and continually chirping, as their parents make run after run to our tree. We can hardly wait until they bring their young to our willow to teach them the ways of sapsuckers.



Note: I know that healthy trees would not be their choice and therefore ours must be sick. Sure enough, a few days ago as I was trimming around the trunk, I pulled out some grass roots and the rot was exposed.

Gillian Butler, Nanaimo



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NALT SUMMER STAFF

Once again NALT has two students working for sixteen weeks during the summer, funded mostly through a grant from Human Resources Development Canada (HRDC).

Katie Sharp, our Native Plant & Naturescape Assistant, is a student of MalU's Horticultural Program, with a special interest in propagating native plants - exactly the kind of focus and expertise that we need to move the plant nursery forward and expand the stock. She is also the single parent of a three-year-old going concern named Fergus.

Greg Yoshida, our Summer Programs Assistant, is a student at UBC's School of Engineering with a lifelong involvement in environmental activities, and with construction experience (valuable for building boardwalks) and a number of other skills. The world will benefit from another "green-minded" engineer!

When they aren't at the plant nursery, Katie and Greg work hard on planning and presenting summer activities and special events, including those to promote the *Coalition to Save Mt. Benson*. Some of the upcoming activities are:

- **June 14th, 18th:** Storm-drain marking with students of Aspengrove School (14th), and Mt. Benson School (18th)
- **June 19th:** A scheduled work crew to build boardwalks in DL 56, Linley Valley (to be repeated every week throughout the summer)
- **June 21st:** A work party in Linley Valley with students of Aspengrove School.
- **June 26th:** A guided walk in the Linley Valley (to be repeated every two weeks throughout the summer).
- **June 29th:** An Information Meeting at Cottonwood Golf Club for the neighbours of Cassidy Airport, regarding the small population of Vesper Sparrows that nests near the airport. (See story, page 5)
- **July 18th:** Annual Summer Picnic at the Van Kerkoerle property in Cassidy.

Call the NALT Stewardship Centre to book a guided walk in Linley Valley, or to volunteer to help with any of the activities above.

LIKE GARDENING?

If you are missing the opportunity to pull weeds, propagate plants, or just get your hands dirty, why not volunteer to help at NALT'S *Natural Abundance* native plant nursery? Call the NALT Stewardship Centre, 714-1990.

NOTE: A special bonus for nursery workers after a hot day in the field is a stop on the way home for a swim in the Nanaimo River!

WILDFLOWERS FOR SALE

NALT still has a large stock of native wildflower plants and bulbs that were recently salvaged from a meadow in Harewood that was slated for residential development. Although most of the species have now finished flowering, they are still identifiable by their leaves. Replanted into the right location, they will bloom again next spring, and for many years.

Species available include: blue camas and death camas, sea blush, monkey flowers, chocolate lilies, saxifrage and alum root, honey-suckle, spring gold, blue-eyed susan, and an assortment of other small meadow cover plants.

In addition to this stock of wildflowers, the *Natural Abundance* plant nursery in Cassidy has a wide selection of native shrubs and trees for sale all year round. Call the NALT Stewardship Centre to arrange a visit to the plant nursery, or to order plants.



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BORN AT THE NANAIMO AIRPORT

Katie Sharp and Greg Yoshida

Who is this small brown bird? And why is it raising such concern within the birding community? It's the coastal sub-species of the Vesper Sparrow (*Poecetes*



gramineus affinis). Red-listed in BC, this sub-species is down to only six or seven confirmed nesting pairs in Canada. And the sole nesting site in Canada is at the Cassidy Airport, south of Nanaimo!

Why have Vesper Sparrows declined? :

While there are no sure reasons for the decline of this species, factors such as climate change, increasing levels of pollution, and habitat destruction due to development could be responsible. Farmland is also much more heavily used than was historically the case, and the Vesper Sparrow prefers fallow land to actively cultivated fields. Another possible cause for decline is aggressive hunting by feral cats and other wild predators. There is a small population of Vesper Sparrows in Washington State, but in Canada, nesting pairs have only been found at the Nanaimo Airport in recent years.

How to identify: The Vesper Sparrow is not a visually distinctive bird. In fact, it has been said that to spot a Vesper Sparrow, you need to look for the plainest little brown bird in the meadow. It is a small (6 inches long, up to one ounce), grey-brown bird with a dull-white underside, and lightly streaked on the throat, breast and sides. It does have a distinctive white eye ring, and white outer tail feathers that are best seen in flight. This is the easiest way to tell a Vesper Sparrow from the more common Savannah Sparrow, which has a yellow stripe above its eyes.

The Vesper Sparrow gets its name from its habit of singing in late afternoon and early evening – at vesper time. However, during the nesting season, the male will sing throughout the day, serenading his mate from the highest available perch near the nest.

Habitat: The Vesper Sparrow is a migratory bird that makes its home in dry, open grasslands with patchy vegetation and short grasses. Farmed areas near fallow fields and dry, rocky soils near fence-rows are favoured. Nests are built on the ground, in the base of leafy plants. This offers some protection from predators, and the scattered vegetation and fence-posts provide an elevated perch for the male when he is singing.

What you can do to help save and increase the population of Vesper Sparrows, and other threatened bird species: look for the launch of a local action to conserve the open grassland at and around the Nanaimo airport; help remove the thick growth of Scotch broom on the airport grounds; naturalize your own backyard to provide alternate nesting areas for birds displaced by development; put out nesting boxes to help protect birds against predators. Information and resources are available through NALT, the Gary Oak Ecosystems Recovery Team (www.goert.ca), and the Canadian Wildlife Service.

A Community Information Meeting:

"Vesper Sparrows at the Nanaimo Airport"

Tuesday, June 29th

The Cottonwood Golf Club, Cassidy

Doors open 6:30 pm; Program begins 7:00 pm

**Displays, slides, refreshments
presentations, draw Prizes**

Everyone interested in the future of these little birds is welcome

*Co-sponsored by: NALT and
the Garry Oak Ecosystems Recovery Team*

VAN KERKOERLE PROPERTY UPDATE

Sarah Bonar, NALT Habitat Protection Specialist

It's been three years since Peter and Anneke decided to gift their wonderful property in Cassidy, and we are all very excited to finally have the end of the paperwork in sight; we look forward to a successful completion of this amazing gift before the end of this year. When the dust settles, NALT will be the property owner, Peter and Anneke will have a Life Estate, and a Conservation Covenant will ensure the protection of the property in perpetuity. This will happen in two stages; first the Life Estate and title transfer, and then the Conservation Covenant.

The Life Estate is in the final review stage with the lawyers and will be completed very soon. Once it is ready, the property title will be transferred to NALT, and the Life Estate to Peter and Anneke will be registered on the title.

The Conservation Covenant is again moving forward now that the Agricultural Land Reserve (ALR) has published guidelines for conservation covenants. The ALR Commission must approve a conservation covenant on ALR property before it can be registered on the land title. The guidelines require a large amount of information to justify restriction of agricultural practices on all or part of the land; therefore NALT will be completing a detailed habitat inventory (Baseline Inventory) of the property over the summer. The two covenant holders, TLC-The Land Conservancy and the Cowichan Community Land Trust, have been invited to participate.

Think of us to print your newsletters, manuals, reports etc. from disk, email or your hard copy.



Mail Boxes Etc.
Longwood Station
756-0333

NALT GETS A ROOM-MATE

Beginning on June 21st, NALT will have a "room-mate" for at least nine months. About three months ago, the newly formed WASTENOT Society approached NALT about renting the back office and sharing other amenities of the NALT Stewardship Centre, and on June 21st three HRDC-funded staff will be starting work. These workers will help WASTENOT to launch a new waste reduction venture - setting up a plant to recycle disposable diapers.

This venture is compatible with NALT's environmental interests, and WASTENOT already has friendly ties with NALT. Michelle Bigg, a former NALT Director, is the Executive Director of WASTENOT; Gail Adrienne, NALT Executive Director, and Gillian Butler, another NALT Director, are founding Board members of the new society. The revenues from rent and other services will provide a welcome boost to NALT's finances.

So, look for new faces next time you stop by the Stewardship Centre on Wallace Street.

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PRE-AUTHORIZED CONTRIBUTION CAMPAIGN

NALT has recently sent out a letter to its many friends and supporters, asking that they consider supporting NALT activities financially by committing to a regular, pre-authorized contribution (see PAC form below). The letter outlines several of NALT's recent successes, and goes on to suggest future and current activities:

- *With logging continuing on Mount Benson, NALT is working with the RDN to acquire the property at the summit; and we are working with other local groups to find a solution to Weyerhaeuser's plans to log the north east slope of the mountain;*
- *In June, we will launch The Linley Valley Campaign, Phase II.- to find ways to protect significant parts of the valley, starting with 260 acres of Crown land adjacent to the new park;*
- *We are currently drafting conservation covenants for five more properties in the region – more than doubling the number we now manage;*
- *We are developing a native plant nursery, with a wide selection of plants to meet a growing demand;*
- *We will continue to deliver projects that promote voluntary stewardship of land and waterways in the region, and to provide services through the Stewardship Resource Centre;*
- *It is our goal to be responsive to other land protection needs in the Nanaimo area as they arise.*

Help NALT plan for the future! *These initiatives take planning and resources. In order for NALT to continue to provide all our services we need your ongoing support, ideally in the form of a monthly contribution. With steady monthly contributions, NALT can be even more effective in the work we do...*

If you didn't get this letter, we hope that you, too, will consider this way to support NALT on a regular and continuing basis, by completing and sending in the following PAC form.

PRE-AUTHORIZED CONTRIBUTION FORM

A number of NALT supporters are signing up for our monthly donor program or pre-authorized contribution (PAC). Regular monthly donations help us to reduce mailing & administrative costs and allow NALT to plan and forecast our annual financial support. As little as \$5-\$10 per month helps, and includes your annual membership.

(a) Yes, I authorize NALT to automatically withdraw from my bank account on the first of each month:

\$10.00 \$20.00 \$30.00 Other amount: _____

I have enclosed a blank cheque marked VOID

OR

(b) Yes, I authorize NALT to automatically charge my Visa card on the first of each month:

\$10.00 \$20.00 \$30.00 Other amount: _____

Card #: _____ Exp: _____ Signature: _____

Beginning: month: _____, 2004.

You may change or cancel your contribution at any time by sending NALT written notice.

You will receive one tax receipt for the total amount of monthly gifts after the end of each tax year.

NALT does not sell, trade or loan our database of donors, members or contacts to individuals or other organizations

Please send this completed form to: Nanaimo Area Land Trust, #8-140 Wallace Street, Nanaimo BC V9R 5B1

Thank you for your continuing support; it means more than dollars

THANK YOU ALL

As always, we have many people and organizations to thank for all their support since our last Newsletter. Many thanks to all those who have contributed time, renewed memberships, or made financial donations:

Kosta V Aro, Vivian Bohl, Lynne & Richard Bowen, Patricia Britt, Carolyne Brown, Lynn Cross, Frank Dalziel, Nancy & Bill Dickinson, Vilma Dube, Doris Edwards, Ruth Elgie, Heidi Fargo, Joan Fowler, Ross & Judy Fraser, Carolyn & Charles Gahr, Ian Gartshore, Jamie, Terri & Carmanah Gauthier, Thomas Grauman, Alison Graves, Ted Gullison, Mavis & Tony Guppy, Stuart Hall, Lindsay Hartley, Helping Hands Club of the Workers Compensation Board, Tom Hutton, Marcelle Jones, Paul & Jo Kynaston, Bob & Karen Lane, Helen & Ted Liebich, Diane Lifton, Ian MacAskie, Anne MacMillan, Mike & Becky Mann, Alison McDonell, Members of Milner Gardens Volunteer Propagation Group, Gudrun Moles, Don Oliver, Gail & Dennis Otto, Daphne Paterson, Jeanie Paterson, Betty Penston, Betty Pepper, Provincial Employees Community Services Fund, Nina & Jay Rastogi, Eleanor Routley, Kathleen & Fred Schloessinger, Dr. Martin Spencer, Patrick & H el ene Sullivan, Normon Thibault, Mary Thiess, Bonnie Thiessen, Jean B. Thomson, Arlene Tucker, Tuesday Hikers & The City of Nanaimo-Roadside Litter Program, Dr. Paxie Vreede, Berniece Ward, Daniel Ware, Patricia & Martin Weideman, Kathleen Mary Weldon, Cady Patricia Williams, Dawn Wilson, Hazel Withler, Anonymous donor through the United Way of Nanaimo.

Every attempt has been made to ensure this list is accurate and inclusive. Our apologies if we have missed you. Please let us know if you notice any error or omission.

NALT MEMBERSHIP FORM

I would like to:

- (a) Become a monthly donor: (Fill out reverse side of this to set up a monthly Pre-Authorized Contribution)
- (b) Renew my membership, or (c) Begin a NALT membership.
- Student/Senior/Low Income-\$12.00 Individual-\$24.00 Family-\$36.00 Corporation-\$60.00 Lifetime-\$150.00
- (d) Make a one-time donation in the amount of \$_____

Please make cheques payable to Nanaimo Area Land Trust

OR

Charge my VISA credit card: Card # _____ Exp _____ Signature: _____

Membership in the name of _____ Tax Receipt in name of: _____

Mailing Address: _____ City, Prov, Postal Code: _____

Telephone: _____ Email : _____ Send Newsletter by Email , or Mail

NALT is a Registered Charitable Organization and tax receipts will be issued for contributions \$20.00 or more

Would you like to remain anonymous ? Check here if yes:

NALT does not sell, trade or loan our database of donors, members or contacts to individuals or other organizations

Please send this completed form to: Nanaimo Area Land Trust, #8-140 Wallace Street, Nanaimo BC V9R 5B1