



TRUST TALK

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Conserving signature landscapes and vital habitat together with the communities of the Columbia River region

Columbian white-tailed deer will have new home

Columbia Land Trust acquires 451-acres of Crims Island property in the Lower Columbia River for conservation.

By Matthew Jones

Rarely does a single action accomplish as many conservation goals as were achieved through Columbia Land Trust's recent purchase of 451 acres of Crims Island in the Columbia River. Virtually every conservation group in the region had identified conservation of this island as a top priority. The island, and its recent conservation, is a stunning example of both the great conservation values of the Columbia River estuary and the success that is possible when many conservation groups work together.

Crims Island is located near Clatskanie, Oregon, approximately 55 miles upriver from the Pacific Ocean. It will now be restored for habitat for Columbia white-tailed deer, migrating salmon, and other wildlife species and will be conserved – forever. The island is part of a system of lower river floodplains and main channel islands that are still under the tidal influence of the Ocean and its restoration will provide forested wetland habitat and marshland that has been identified as extremely significant to the recovery of salmon and other species in the Columbia River system. Columbia Land Trust will donate the property to U.S. Fish and Wildlife to manage as part of the refuge system.



***Crims Island
Columbia County, Oregon***

Virtually every conservation group in the region had identified conservation of this island as a top priority.

The Columbian white-tailed deer population is recovering and will likely be removed from endangered species status thanks to the population that can now be maintained on the island. In addition, hundreds of juvenile salmon have been found in backwater areas of the island in the last few months by researchers from the U.S. Geological Survey. Additional backwater

salmon habitat will be restored as part of the Land Trust project.

A true public-private partnership, Columbia Land Trust was able to secure an option on the property with the landowners while it then worked with the Bonneville Power Administration (BPA) and U.S. Fish and Wildlife to secure funding for the purchase of the property. Along with BPA's funding for the acquisition of the property, the Army Corps of Engineers is providing the necessary federal match by completing the restoration on the property. The Army Corps of Engineers will work with U.S. Fish and Wildlife and the U.S. Geological Service on the restoration of the property.

These islands provide unique and important

habitat within the estuary for fish, wildlife and watershed function. This is one of the few remaining large islands in the river that has not been radically altered by dredging. Restoration will provide large areas of backwater habitat for fish, restore habitat conditions critical for the white-tailed deer, and restore the native vegetation community to benefit a large variety of wildlife species. Restoration efforts will include removing invasive non-native plants, breaching dikes to restore the natural hydrology to the marsh and wooded swamplands and restoring native vegetation. The island is approximately 600 acres in total, with the State of Oregon and two other private parties owning the remainder of the land.



Crims Island channel

“We are thrilled that the landowners were willing to take the time to work with us on this project. By agreeing to accept an option on the purchase of the property they gave us the time to work with our partners in creating a funding strategy that brought the land into conservation,” says Glenn Lamb, the Land Trust’s executive director. The property was only days away from going to auction when Land Trust staff was able to secure the option.

Rhythms

Glenn Lamb's Muse

Geese are in the air, soaring overhead as we busily go about our daily errands. Up in the mountains, pine cones thump to the ground, released by squirrels getting ready for winter. Within a few weeks, salmon will be returning to spawning beds throughout our homelands, seeking rich gravel beds to pass along their heritage.

At Columbia Land Trust, we pay attention to the seasonal rhythms on thousands of acres of privately conserved lands. Week before last, Stuart Johnson walked our Klickitat – Dillacort Creek lands and met with a black bear grubbing for insects. Further upstream along Logging Camp Creek, isolated pools are alive with steelhead fry, one to five inches long. They welcome the returning rains, which eventually will connect their pools to the river and provide them with the chance to head out to sea. Before we know it, dozens of bald eagles will be perched along riverside trees occasionally launching themselves down for a snack of spawned-out salmon.

We humans have our own rhythms.

One of our octogenarian landowners lives in Portland, caring for her younger sister and maintaining the family affairs. Together with their brother, the three siblings owned their old family farm, valuable habitat along a coastal river in Oregon.

She is still vibrant as ever, but she realizes that the day has come to make sure that her family’s wishes about their land can be realized. Recently her 91 year-old brother died. All three of the siblings loved the environment and animals. “It is a crime if we don’t do everything we can to conserve these salmon, these natural areas that define our northwest way of life,” she says.

All of you – our members – are the reason we are there for this dear landowner and for other landowners in our region who want to conserve their lands. May we be as reliable a force in conserving these great lands as the natural rhythms of land, wildlife and people.



Elk Herd

Little White Salmon Biodiversity Reserve

New addition

Fearless triathlon machine, Stuart Johnson, gets his biggest kicks at The Vine Man Iron Man qualifier in Sonoma, California. When he's not running or biking or swimming, or performing controller responsibilities in the office, Stuart can be found eating food prepared for him (he admits he's lazy) or listening to all things guitar, provided they are also melodic. Stuart draws his land conservation enthusiasm from the knowledge that he is contributing to the preservation of today's landscapes.

Help build the Columbia Land Trust stewardship program

Become a Land Steward and Adopt your Property Today!

A Land Steward cares for a specific Columbia Land Trust property of his or her choice by monitoring, managing and experiencing the landscape and resources of conservation lands.

Duties include photographing the land, filling out monitoring report forms, implementing a management strategy, and reporting to the Columbia Land Trust Stewardship Program.

Land Stewards determine time commitment. Training and resources are provided. Can be an individual or team effort.

Call Lindsay Cornelius at 360-696-0131 to become a Land Steward today.

Volunteer Days

You can be a powerful part of Columbia Land Trust! Our volunteers are credited with contributing hours of effort on restoration, maintenance and research projects in and out of the office, taking our organization (and land) to its fullest potential.

If you have not previously volunteered for Columbia Land Trust, please take a minute to call, [email](mailto:), or register online at www.columbialandtrust.org/volunteer.htm.

VOLUNTEER DAYS CALENDAR

November 15: Forest Inventory on the Wind River

Join Columbia Land Trust for an hour training session on forest monitoring techniques and then help us collect valuable forest inventory data on our Wind River property in Skamania County, WA. Half or full day event, child friendly, dog friendly, transportation available.

December 20: 2nd Annual Winter Solstice Squirrel Nest Surveys!

If you enjoyed this event last year, or if you weren't able to make it last year, we'd like to invite you to participate in our western gray squirrel nest surveys on Logging Camp Creek, a tributary to the Klickitat River near Lyle, WA. This event is an excellent way to experience oak woodlands and to celebrate the beginning of winter while helping Columbia Land Trust with its stewardship responsibilities! Full day event, transportation available.

To volunteer, or for more details, contact:

Lindsay Cornelius, Stewardship Coordinator
1351 Officers Row
Vancouver, WA 98661
360-696-0131
or
email: lindsayc@columbialandtrust.org

Columbia Heritage Circle

Leave a Legacy of Conservation



Columbia Land Trust
Conserving Land Forever

"Columbia Land Trust does the right kind of work. I would do many of the same things if I had a lot of money." - *Rex Ziak, author of In Full View, a book about the Lewis and Clark expedition and their experiences on the Lower Columbia River.*

Become part of Columbia Land Trust's ever-growing **Columbia Heritage Circle**.

Columbia Land Trust has pledged to care in perpetuity for the land that you, as a member are helping conserve today. By including the Land Trust in your estate planning you are establishing a legacy of conservation that will stand the test of time and continue to support the kind of work that matters to you long after your own lifetime. By leaving a legacy through the Columbia Heritage Circle, you can indeed bring "a lot of money" to conservation.

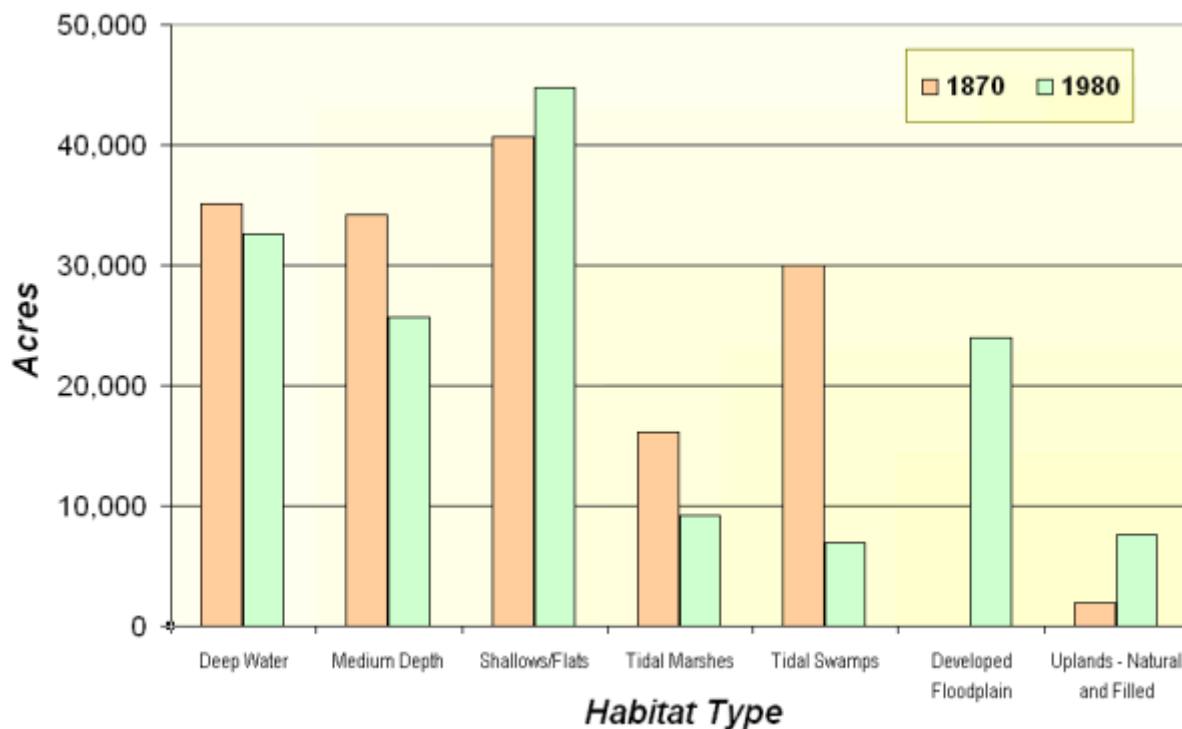
For information on including Columbia Land Trust in your estate planning, check the box on the enclosed reply envelope, or call Glenn Lamb at 360-696-0131.

Intertidal spruce swamps of the Columbia River estuary: A critical link

By Ian Sinks

While struggling through the nearly impenetrable tangle of vegetation on the Grays River in Wahkiakum County recently, the group I was with had the opportunity to ask the question, "Why?" Why is this spruce swamp, with all its tangled disorder of vegetation, fallen trees, and more holes and channels than can be counted, good habitat for the Columbia River estuary and for salmonids? And does restoring this type of habitat help recover declining salmonid populations? The answer really has two parts: The first is that intertidal spruce habitat is an important contributor to the health of the estuary. The second is that the Columbia River estuary is a critical link in the life history of salmonids throughout the entire watershed, juveniles in particular.

On an estuary-wide scale, we know that there have been numerous changes to the landscape since the time of European settlement. Channels and river flows have been altered, towns have grown along the banks, trees and fish have been harvested, and vegetation communities have changed. The ultimate effect of this change is that the estuary is not as healthy as it once was. It is a less productive place for fish, waterfowl, shorebirds and a myriad of other wildlife species that depend on what is arguably one of the most productive ecosystem types anywhere.



Source: Changes in Columbia River Estuary Habitat Types (D.Thomas, CREST 1983)

One of the most dramatic changes to the estuary environment has been the loss of intertidal swamps and marshes: Over the past 100 years as much as 65% of this habitat type has been diked and drained to convert the land to agricultural and residential uses (see chart below). This habitat loss has been identified as a major modifier to estuary ecosystem functions and process. It has disconnected the river from the floodplain and significantly reduced a number of functions including flood storage capacity, tidal water exchange critical to nutrient cycling, organic material recruitment, habitat access for a large variety of species, and water quality functions. All of these habitat functions are important to at least one class of wildlife: salmonids.

Anadromous salmonids throughout the Columbia River basin, including coho, chum, chinook, steelhead and searun cutthroat trout, all have at least one thing in common: the estuary. Every fish that spawns in a freshwater river system and matures in the ocean environment must come and go through the estuary. But the estuary is much more than just a conduit for fish. There is a growing understanding of how fish utilize the estuarine environment, and how critical this environment is to the completion of their lifecycle. Estuaries provide critical habitat for adult anadromous salmon while they make the physiological transition between salt and freshwater, and for juvenile salmonids it is critical habitat for foraging, physiological transition and refuge.

One of the most critical factors for juvenile salmon survival within the Columbia River estuary is size and nutritional condition. A young fish that has fed and grown well stands a much better chance of making it to the Pacific Ocean, ultimately increasing its odds of returning to spawn. Studies have shown that many of the prey on which salmon feed are dependent on detritus (dead material) for food. In other words, that tangle of mud, plants and wood material found in intertidal areas of the Grays River provide a great source of food for fish in the river, as well as in the estuary.



Spruce swamp and intertidal marsh of Grays Bay

Within the estuary, fish will move with the tides into different habitats: They ride the incoming tides into marshes and swamps to access feeding areas with abundant cover, and return to larger channels or backwater areas during lower tides. The daily fluctuation of the tides creates a productive dynamic of nutrient, water, and food exchange.

The transition from fresh to saltwater, and visa versa, is one of the more complex and wondrous physiological transitions in nature. All anadromous fish complete this transition twice: once on the outmigration from rearing areas, and again on their return to natal waters to spawn. This transition requires time and an availability of habitats offering a wide range of water salinities. A functional, healthy estuary system composed of diverse habitat and vegetation types, with complex channels and variable flow regimes, provides this for anadromous fish.

A healthy system of complex habitats also provides refuge for rearing and migrating fish. The Columbia River is a dynamic and powerful system capable of heavy flows and its own share of adverse conditions. Like sheltered coves in a storm, backwater areas provide refuge. Fish can make use of a diverse network of habitat areas to find more favorable flow conditions, better water quality, more productive feeding habitat, as well as shelter from predators.

The Columbia Land Trust has identified intertidal/spruce swamp wetlands as a key conservation priority based on its importance to the estuary and to salmon recovery, as well as the opportunity to provide community benefit through conservation and restoration. This priority has led the Land Trust to significant conservation work in the Grays Bay watershed and to emerging projects in the Youngs Bay watershed of Oregon. Working with conservation partners, significant areas of intact and functional spruce wetlands are being permanently protected, and other areas of disturbed historic habitat are being restored. It is the goal of the Land Trust to complete these projects, which total almost 1,000 acres, in a responsible manner. This means working with local communities, establishing clear project objectives, and implementing a monitoring program to demonstrate project success. In the coming years we hope to expand the body of knowledge showing the role this habitat type plays in the ecosystem; for estuary and watershed function, for salmon recovery, for local communities, and for the people who every now and then feel the need to immerse themselves in a rich and productive natural environment.

Habitat Type	Definition of Habitat Types
Deep Water	Open water 18 feet and deeper
Medium Depth	Open water between 18 and 6 feet in depth
Shallow Water and Flats	Open water areas above 6 feet in depth to the edge of vegetation or Mean Higher High Water (MHHW) where vegetation is absent
Tidal Marshes	Between MHHW and Mean Lower Low Water (MLLW)
Tidal Swamp	Wetland areas between MLLW and the upper limit of wetland vegetation (approximately 3.7 feet above MLLW)

Source: from Columbia River Estuary Science Taskforce - Changes in Columbia River Estuary Habitat Types (D.Thomas, 1983)

Record attendance at 2003 member's picnic

It was a beautiful day along the shores of the Columbia River where more than 100 Columbia Land Trust members gathered at the home of Brooke and Dory Brookings for the annual event. The Brookings have donated a conservation easement on the 12 acre property, which includes springs, ponds and Columbia River shoreline. Several of the Brookings children returned home to help the couple host the picnic. Dory welcomed everyone with her accustomed good cheer and humility. "Everyone should have the opportunity to experience this," Dory says as she waves her hand to the expansive views from beneath the towering cottonwoods.



A few of the 100 members who attended picnic on September 6th

Members were treated to lunch and the chance to visit with other Land Trust members who all have an interest in conserving Columbia River landscapes and habitat. Several landowners who have placed, or are in the process of placing, their lands into conservation were in attendance as well, allowing members to truly connect with the work that they support. In addition to lunch, well-known local naturalist Wilson Cady led members on a nature walk of the property.

Save The Date!

**Great Lands Great Actions
DINNER and AUCTION**

Earth Day
Thursday, April 22, 2004
at
Red Lion at the Quay

It will be bigger and better than ever and we are already looking
for great items to auction off and folks to help organize the event.

Call Terry Cornelius at 360-695-0707
for more information.

Membership Donations

Your membership is matched dollar for dollar up to \$100,000 through the 2003 Columbia River Membership Challenge. Following are gifts and memberships from to July 2003 to September 2003.

Members (\$1-49)

Anonymous
Susan Arney
Daniel Block
James Brookes
Frank Butchart & Judith Buffo
Alma Cahn
Celia Carlson
Dudley & Phyllis Church
Paul & Louise Clare
Ruth Craford
Ruth Craford
- in honor of Ariel Magram
Daniel & Denise Dammann
Ken Davis
Jerry DeMoss
Gladys Fey
Lianne Forney
- in honor of Nancy Nellor & James
Retsinas
John & Catherine Gosling
Jon Griesser
Keith Hadley
Marilyn Hall
Charles Hamar
Merna Holmberg
John & Sherold Barr Kaib
Rayna Kline
- in honor of Nancy Nellor & James
Retsinas
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Marcia Limoges
Len Magazine
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Mary Lou Munroe
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Caroline Skinner
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Stewardship Coordinator

Stuart Johnson
Controller

For information
360-696-0131

Columbia Land Trust Wish List

Astoria office
Microwave

Vancouver office
Fire-proof safe
*(rated to protect
electronic media)*
Desktop computer
(833Mhz or faster)

If you would like to donate
any of these items,
please give us a call
at
360-696-0131
or
Astoria office
503-338-5263

**Double your contribution to Columbia Land Trust with a
matching gift from your employer.**

Special Thanks

To the following companies for their generous matching gift donations

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Columbia Land Trust, a private, non-profit organization, was founded in 1990. We're dedicated to conserving signature landscapes and vital habitat together with the communities of the Columbia River region. Questions, comments, or concerns may be directed to info@columbialandtrust.org

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