

COLUMBIA LAND TRUST

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Fieldbook

Conserving and Caring for Vital Lands, Waters,
and Wildlife of the Columbia River Region



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(*Castor canadensis*)
skull

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Running on Faith

I ran the 10,000-meter (6.2-mile) run for my college track team. My senior year, in 1983, my goal was to run faster than 30 minutes, which equates to about 4:50 per mile, or about 72.5 seconds per lap for 25 laps. I remember so clearly starting races at that pace and thinking, "How can I possibly keep this pace going for 24 more laps?"

Thinking of all of those laps was overwhelming. Instead, that year, I decided that I would focus my attention to just the one lap I was on. Not only that, but I would focus on just the next step. Could I manage to take one more step at that pace? My very next race, I crossed the line in 29:57.

In 1990, eleven others and I founded Columbia Land Trust. We believed that the Northwest was one of the most spectacular places in the world. We knew that population growth was putting pressure on our most precious places. Indeed, the Portland/Vancouver area was just beginning a 25-year period of gaining about 75 people per day, 365 days a year.

Back then, we had faith that Northwesterners were so steeped in their love for the Northwest that they would absolutely take positive actions to conserve the places they most cherished. But we were a fledging organization with no experience, no confidence that we could have an impact. The goal seemed so distant. The dream of interlaced natural places along our rivers and streams, protected farms and forests, conserved green spaces throughout our cities—it all seemed so daunting.

So what did we do? We started by building a single relationship. We had lunch and talked about our hopes, our plans. We recruited more ideas. We were introduced to more supporters. We met with landowners, one person at a time.

Today, I look up and realize, impossibly, that Columbia Land Trust has covered 25 laps of the sun. We have now successfully conserved more than 25,000 acres, working with hundreds of landowners. We have nearly 3,000 members who contribute every year to help us achieve this dream—the dream of the Northwest, forever conserved, the dream of people knowing, loving, and caring for our natural places.

After 25 years of conservation, we are more energized than ever. We have more power than ever to conserve our great places. Unlike a running race, we have been gathering more strength, more wisdom, more experience, and more supporters with every lap around the sun. As we approach the next 25 years, we remain focused on what we will accomplish this year, this month, this week, this day. And, because of each of you, we are confident as we take that next step. Thank you for joining us on this journey!

Glenn Lamb
Executive Director



Columbia Land Trust works with people throughout the region to conserve and care for land, water, and wildlife.

Columbia Land Trust has earned accreditation from the Land Trust Alliance, which recognizes land trusts that adhere to national standards for excellence, uphold the public trust with rigorous ethical standards, and take steps to ensure that conservation efforts are permanent.



Photo by Ed Ogle, Cover photo by Dann Thombs

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front foot & hind foot

6"

Never a Dull Moment

The North American beaver is a conservation success story. Now, how will we coexist?

"They're ingenious, they're single-minded, and they have all day long," offers Stewardship Director Ian Sinks with a wry smile. It's an apt description for a worthy adversary or a valuable ally, and it's hard to tell which distinction Sinks has in mind as he recalls the North American beaver (*Castor canadensis*).

Above water, the beaver's plodding, skittish demeanor belies its awesome ability to transform the surrounding landscape. These unassuming rodents are the original engineers of the American West.

Prior to European settlement, roughly 60 million beavers gnawed, dammed, and nested in nearly every watershed on the continent. Their dams continually reshaped river systems, turning rushing rivers into meandering streams—creating wetlands, slow-flowing channels, and ponds in the process. These temporary constructs infused ecosystems with nutrient-rich sediment while also offering perches for waterfowl and cover for juvenile fish.

By the 1820s, fur traders with the British Hudson's Bay Company sought to ward off competition from westward-venturing Americans by depleting fur stocks across the

Northwest. The company's trappers swept through the Columbia River region, exterminating every beaver in sight. In just 25 years, beavers were nearly extirpated from the Pacific Northwest.

Fortunately, a decline in demand for pelts and proper management helped beaver waddle back from the brink of extinction. Today, their numbers range from six million to twelve million, and the beaver is widely heralded as a conservation success story.

A funny thing happened along the beaver's 20th century path to recovery, however. Americans tamed the West, installing nests and dams of their own, with a network of roads and cities to boot. They regulated the flow and direction of wild, flood-prone river systems. Humans supplanted beavers as chief engineers.

Today, a flourishing beaver population in the Columbia River region is creating crucial habitat while presenting new challenges where human and beaver designs overlap. Columbia Land Trust's property on Schoolhouse Creek, a tributary of southern Washington's Washougal River, is one such place.

A road crosses over Schoolhouse Creek, impounding water on the surrounding land, where nearby beaver activity contributes to ideal wetland conditions for juvenile Coho salmon. A culvert allows the creek and its fish to pass beneath the road. To local beavers, the culvert beneath the road represents a hole in an otherwise ideal dam. Activated by the sound of rushing water, the beavers have been doing their best to plug the culvert for over a decade. When successful, the resulting dam has a tendency to flood the road.

How exactly does one deter a beaver from its driving instinctual impulse? There are a number of tactics, and in recent years the Land Trust's stewardship team has considered them all.

"Relocation is an option, but it's not sustainable," says Sinks. "There are at least a dozen beavers on the property and many more in the area. Any we'd remove would just be replaced."

In 2011, the team installed a custom-built, metal fence around the culvert in the shape of a narrow triangle. This device, known as a "beaver deceiver," is designed to present area beavers with a more complex and daunting dam project. The deceiver offers an innovative solution to the challenge of deterring beaver activity while still maintaining fish passage.

Property owners across the region have employed these devices, along with trapping, relocation, and fencing to prevent beavers from flooding their fields and felling their trees. As the human population has increased throughout the Northwest, so have encounters with beavers.

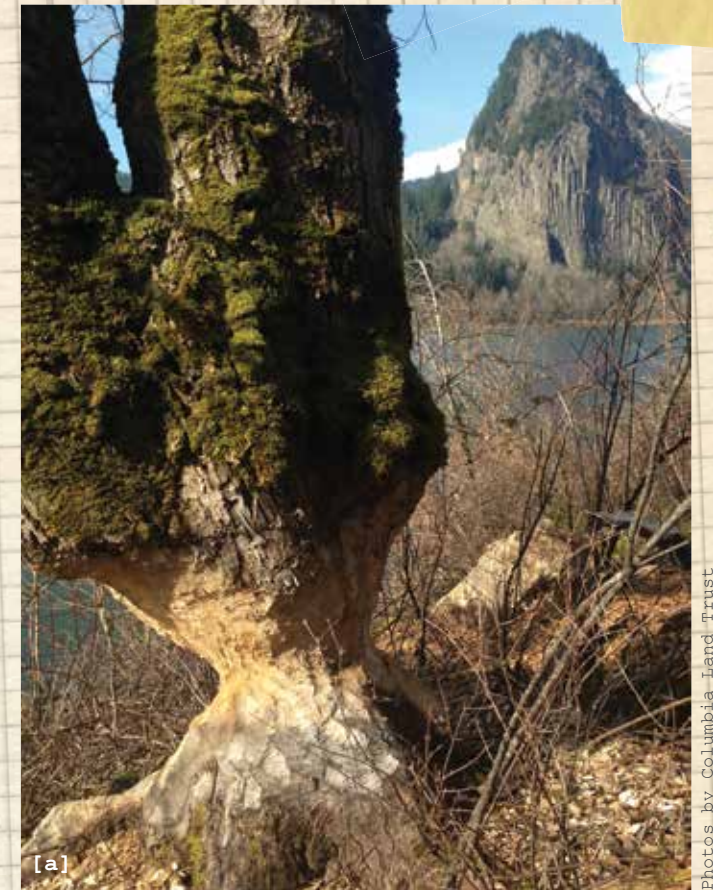
At the same time, local agencies and environmental groups are exploring the potential benefits of beaver activity. Climate change and population pressures have led to dwindling water supplies, particularly east of the Cascades. Rivers that beavers once slowed with their dams now gush straight downstream at the first major snow melt, then dry up in early summer, leaving crops and livestock vulnerable to prolonged drought. Remarkably, the grandchildren of the ranchers who once drove beavers off their lands are now reintroducing beavers with the hopes of employing their engineering services.

In a recent visit to Schoolhouse Creek, stewardship coordinator Jeff Malone discovered that beavers had largely dammed the new perimeter established by the beaver deceiver. When considering the Land Trust's next counter-maneuver, Sinks notes that only viable approach is maintenance. "We'll make some tweaks to the deceiver, clean out the sediment and detritus, and keep at it."

While it can be tempting to view beavers as pests in areas like Schoolhouse Creek, it helps to remember that we often share the same objective: to restore vital habitat in the Northwest. The primary difference between an invasive

species and a naturalized species is that the latter gives back to its ecosystem. Not only do beavers benefit local wildlife, they might prove to be a crucial ally in addressing increased water scarcity.

Signs of beavers' industry are everywhere, from verdant streambanks to mountain meadows. Its legacy is the Northwest itself. Back and forth, the beaver glides—meticulous and methodical—doing the thankless work of keeping lands wild.



[a]



[b]



[c]

[a] A beaver nearly chewed through a Cottonwood tree on Pierce Island, Washington
[b] Beaver dam along a stream in the Lower Willamette region.
[c] Beaver deceiver at Schoolhouse Creek, Washington.
Opposite: North American beaver (*Castor canadensis*)

Photos by Columbia Land Trust

Photo courtesy of Dan Newcomb



Photo by Hans-Jakob Weinz

The Way Back

4 One local landowner is carrying a piece of home with her on a remarkable journey.



Paula Larwick

This past Thanksgiving, Paula Larwick gathered river stones from the cool, mossy banks of Rock Creek in southwest Washington's Dole Valley. Larwick's granddaughter Veronica painted the stones and traded her artwork for socks to give to the homeless, save for a few.

One tiny pink rock, which bears the inscription "Protect Our Earth" along with the names of all seven of Larwick's grandchildren, was set aside for unique and unlikely journey.

Larwick will carry the stone with her as she and her husband, Chris Overholtzer, traverse the 500-mile Camino de Santiago or "Way of St. James." Revered by avid hikers,

the Camino is a centuries-old pilgrimage route from southwestern France to the shrine at the Cathedral of Santiago de Compostela in Galicia, Spain.

For many of its travelers, the Camino represents a spiritual journey, a path of retreat, growth, penance, or some combination of the three. At the trail's highest point, between the towns of Manjarin and Foncebadon, stands the Cruz de Ferro, or "Iron Cross." A mountain of stones, deposited by travelers since the Middle Ages, sits piled around the base of the cross.

Traditionally, pilgrims left stones from their homelands as offerings. Today, hikers continue the custom. For some, their stones are left in hopes of forgiveness. For others, the rocks represent past hardship, the weight of which is shed in the hopes of a better future. For Larwick, her small pink stone is a token of reconciliation, acknowledging humanity's history of environmental degradation, offered in the hopes of a brighter future for her grandchildren.

This 55-day trek may sound like the trip of a lifetime, but for Larwick, it'll be the latest stop on an itinerary that reads like an unofficial globe-trekker's bucket list. She's hiked over half of the Appalachian Trail, walked on the Great Wall of China, summited Mount Kilimanjaro, and climbed a portion of the Inca Trail to Machu Picchu. "Hiking keeps you physically active and slows down the pace of life," explains Larwick. "You get to see amazing things, but more than that, you meet amazing people."

Between adventures, Larwick has spent the past 30 years as a Battle Ground-area science and math teacher, doing her best to imbue children with a sense of curiosity for the natural world and instill an ethic of stewardship. For much of that time, she's lived on 100 acres of forest in Dole Valley, the site of excursions of a different scale with her grandchildren. She and Veronica trace paths of rainwater down to Rock Creek, keep an eye out for steelhead lining up under an old logging bridge, and look to the treetops for bald eagles.



Above: Rock Creek, Clark County, Washington. Left: Travellers on the Camino de Santiago approach the Cruz de Ferro.

Larwick recently decided to sell 51 acres of her land to Columbia Land Trust to ensure its permanent conservation. The Land Trust will work to improve habitat and help support the recovery of steelhead in Rock Creek, part of the East Fork Lewis River system. Larwick will continue to live at her home on two adjacent acres, and she looks forward to serving as a site steward, caring for the land close to her heart.

This spring, Larwick will travel the Camino as PoliPoliPing, a trail name she earned on the slopes of Mount Kilimanjaro. In Swahili, polipoli means "slowly, slowly"—a mantra of sorts for the patience and determination required to ascend through thin air at 19,000 feet. The moniker is painted on Veronica's stone, just above a glyph of rolling waves.

As in travelling to faraway places, there is a restorative solace in truly knowing and caring for one's own backyard. Indeed, exploring the natural world slows down the pace of life, and a splendid diversity of life unfurls.



The Cruz de Ferro, or Iron Cross, which marks the highest point on the Camino de Santiago.

Photo by José Antonio Gil Martínez



Above: Rock Creek; Far Left: Historic map of the Camino de Santiago; Middle: Larwick's stone

Rock Creek photos by Columbia Land Trust

Forestlands for All

Columbia Land Trust, a timber company, and public leaders strike a balance south of Mount St. Helens.

Those who have had the pleasure (and pain) of climbing the slopes of Mount St. Helens likely recall stopping on occasion to catch a breath and admire the expansive southward vista. Pale gray scree fields and mudflow remnants give way to dense, forested valleys fanning out toward Swift Reservoir. Today, it's a breathtaking landscape featuring wildlife habitat and working forests that bolster the local economy—but these lands nearly suffered a very different fate.

In the mid-2000s, housing developments started sprouting up in the region's privately owned forests. Controversy over an eruption of unchecked development around the reservoir reached a tipping point in 2006. That's when Columbia Land Trust, Pope Resources (a Washington-based timberland company), and Skamania County began collaborating on a private solution to a complex set of problems.

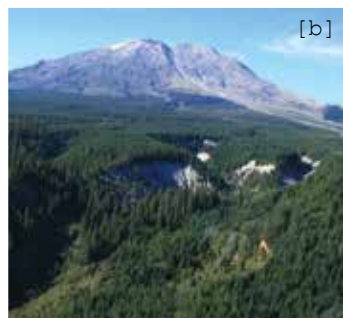
Through this partnership, the Land Trust developed a comprehensive Mount St. Helens Forest Conservation effort to protect from development 20,000 acres around the Swift Reservoir on the Lewis River, all while balancing needs for productive timberlands and economic opportunity.

In December, a crucial phase of this multiyear effort came to fruition as Columbia Land Trust purchased the development rights for 3,095 acres of contiguous forestlands west of Pine Creek. The purchase permanently protects critical riverside habitat and ensures continued forestry on some 2,885 acres.

"This project shows what can be achieved when a timber

company, a conservation group, and public leaders put their heads together to find lasting conservation solutions that benefit both people and nature," says Columbia Land Trust Executive Director Glenn Lamb.

Dubbed Pine Creek West, the project area complements a 2013 Land Trust purchase of 2,330 acres east of Pine Creek. Together, the two purchases protect virtually the entire watershed



[a] Pine Creek, Skamania County, Washington
[b] Mount St. Helens
[c] Project area map showing Pine Creek West and Pine Creek East project areas.

from development. The Pine Creek watershed is the most ecologically important feature within the Mount St. Helens Forest Conservation area because it provides habitat for federally endangered bull trout and abundant wildlife, including the Mount St. Helens elk herd.

The Washington Wildlife & Recreation Program (WWRP) provided nearly \$1.3 million in funding for the Pine Creek West conservation easement. Through this project, Pope Resources, local officials, and public funders demonstrated the type of cooperation that is becoming more important—across the Northwest and nationally—as population and development pressures spread to remote habitat areas. Balanced deals like this one can take years, but it's worth it when forests are conserved forever.

The Gratitude List

PROJECT

Pine Creek West

MOUNT ST. HELENS

Pope Resources, Inc

Washington Wildlife & Recreation Fund

Washington Wildlife & Recreation Coalition

Skamania County Commissioners

An Estuarine Eden

A new property on Crooked Creek builds on Grays Bay conservation efforts.

When Frank White reached out to Columbia Land Trust regarding the sale of his 19-acre vacation property near the mouth of Crooked Creek in Wahkiakum County, Washington, we leaped at the chance. Lands of this property's strategic and ecological importance don't come along every day.

Crooked Creek feeds into Grays Bay, the last major tributary of the Columbia in Washington before the river enters the Pacific. The bay and its tributaries, which also include Grays River and Deep River, provide crucial intertidal habitat for migrating juvenile Coho and Chinook salmon from throughout the Columbia. The region also supports spawning populations of steelhead and sea-run cutthroat trout. In addition, the Grays River is one of the Columbia's largest remaining chum salmon runs.

This unique estuarine ecosystem also hosts a marvelous diversity of migratory waterfowl, shorebirds and songbirds. This time of year, birders can spot American wigeons (*Anas americana*), northern pintails (*Anas acuta*), pied-billed grebes (*Podilymbus podiceps*), and American coots (*Fulica americana*) throughout the region.

The property may not sound like much in isolation, but this latest purchase builds on a larger Crooked Creek conservation effort with major benefits for Northwest wildlife. By acquiring this land, which sits adjacent to 86 acres of existing Land Trust property, we're now able to permanently conserve and restore 105 contiguous acres of critical wetlands in one of the Columbia's most ecologically complex and productive habitats. Crooked Creek is one of ten project areas now totaling 1,596 acres across the Grays Bay region.

While much of the Columbia River Estuary's natural floodplain and wetlands have been lost to deforestation, diking, filling, grazing, and development, the Crooked Creek area represents an opportunity to reverse the trend. Our restoration plans include activities that will reintroduce tidal dynamics and restore side channel habitat for salmon and waterfowl. Additionally, weed control and native planting efforts will improve forested wetland habitat for bear, elk, beaver, and myriad bird species.

This acquisition was made possible by Bonneville Power Administration funding. We're also grateful to the landowner, Frank White, for his commitment to conserving this remarkable land.



[a] Crooked Creek, Wahkiakum County
[b] Map of Grays Bay, Wahkiakum County
[c] American Coot (*Fulica americana*)



[c]

Our Even Bigger Backyard

With strong uptake in Portland and Lake Oswego, Backyard Habitat is expanding.



Columbia Land Trust's Portland office sits at the city's urban core. Just outside its doors, buses hiss, streetcars rumble, and cyclists careen back and forth across the Willamette. Beyond the windows, the

streets, sky, and surrounding buildings unfold in varied tones of gray. It's difficult to imagine this and other nearby landscapes as fertile ground for wildlife conservation—unless, of course, you see what Gaylen Beatty sees.

"We believe that the best way to conserve nature is through our relationships with the communities we serve," says Beatty. "Nature is not dependent upon racial, economic, or social demographics; it can enter our lives in parks, schools and backyards. We can care for and support the vital lands, waters, and wildlife in our region by understanding how our own yards play a vital role in broader conservation work."

Beatty is founder and manager of the Backyard Habitat Certification Program, a partnership of the Audubon Society of Portland and Columbia Land Trust that provides technical assistance, advice, and incentives to residents who want to improve wildlife habitat in their yards, control invasive weeds, and garden sustainably.

What began in 2007 as a pilot program for a handful of West Hills homeowners with an invasive plant problem is now a full-fledged initiative boasting more than 2,700 properties and covering 530 acres. In November, with interest and participation at an all-time high throughout the Portland and Lake Oswego service areas, the Land Trust and the Audubon Society of Portland announced the program's expansion into the cities of Gresham and Fairview. This new partnership increases service by providing a full-time technician to the area, and the program is also tailored to local ecosystems.

"I am so pleased this program has expanded into Gresham," said Gresham City Council President Lori Stegmann. "Our residents now have an opportunity to receive expert advice from Audubon and Columbia Land Trust, giving them a way to have a direct and positive impact on the environment."

By fostering environmental stewardship and empowering participants to preserve and restore wildlife habitat, the Backyard Habitat Program is tapping into a fundamental human desire to connect with the natural world.



[a] Backyard habitats support area pollinators
[b] Naturescaping in a backyard habitat
[c] (from left) Nikkie West, Audubon Society of Portland; Metro Council Representative Shirley Craddick; Gaylen Beatty

Photos by Columbia Land Trust

What's more, it's helping to bridge the gap between environmentally conscious city-dwellers and conservation principles and practices that have traditionally occurred far from urban areas. Through this program, Columbia Land Trust is diversifying its approach to conservation, embracing urban landscapes as an integral component in a broader endeavor to conserve the lands, waters, and wildlife of the Northwest.

Spend a little more time gazing out the front windows of the Land Trust's Portland office, and beyond the immediate horizon of the Morrison Bridge, another horizon emerges. Towering fir trees stand along the crest of the West Hills, silhouetted against the pink afternoon sky. Look deeper and a whole other world emerges.

New Digs

Columbia Land Trust's Portland office is a new hub for conservation innovation.

Land Trust. The very phrase evokes deep forests, wild rivers, pristine wetlands, and boot-clad naturalists with field notes tucked under their arms. Columbia Land Trust's new Portland office—located on the eastside waterfront near the heart of downtown Portland—turns that perception on its ear. Fit snugly between Dig-A-Pony, a retro speakeasy, and Mother Foucault's bookshop, the brick storefront at 511 Southeast Morrison Street serves as a new base for conservation in the Northwest.

Columbia Land Trust shares its new space with the Land Trust Alliance, a national land conservation organization, and the Coalition of Oregon Land Trusts (COLT), a newly formed organization that serves Oregon's broader land trust community. After only a few months of cohabitation, a symbiotic relationship is forming among the three groups. Together, we're coordinating initiatives that are strengthening land trusts and expanding conservation and stewardship efforts throughout the Northwest.

The new Portland office doesn't just look different from environments traditionally associated with land trusts. The metropolitan, well-connected location reflects the Land Trust's comprehensive approach to conservation—an approach that recognizes the value of natural, working, and developed lands.

Gaylen Beatty, manager of the Backyard Habitat Certification program (a partnership with Columbia Land Trust and Audubon Society of Portland), is based out of the new Portland office. The program is flourishing as urban

residents embrace opportunities to learn about nature and restore valuable wildlife habitat, one yard at a time.

The new space also represents the Land Trust's values of thrift and environmental responsibility. The office sits at the intersection of several major bus lines, bike routes, and Portland Streetcar's Central Loop, providing ample modes of alternative transportation. Bike storage and an office shower sweeten the deal for cyclists.

The space, an old storefront, was renovated on a budget through the creative use of existing materials and the hard work of the Land Trust's incredible volunteers. Reused flooring now serves as accent paneling throughout the space, and vintage light fixtures salvaged by our landlord supplement the natural light provided by large front windows.

As with most Columbia Land Trust ventures, the Portland office renovation was possible only through the generosity of friends and partners. Gordon King donated brokerage services, and we received a good deal from our landlord, Marty Urman, who

is a strong supporter of land conservation. Henneberry Eddy Architects provided their services at a steep discount, and our builder, Job Scott of Vara, led our volunteer efforts.

Columbia Land Trust's roots, and its main office, reside in Vancouver, Washington. But its mission to protect the lands, waters, and wildlife of the Columbia River region take its staff from the remote regions of Klickitat Canyon to the coastal estuaries of Grays Bay, and from the working forests of Skamania County to the streets of downtown Portland. It's a diverse region, and it takes a diverse range of ideas and perspectives to protect it.

Whether it's in the conference room, around the coffeemaker, or at "Dig-A-Land-Trust" happy hour next door, Columbia Land Trust's staff and its allies in Portland are collaborating on innovative ways to preserve the wild heart of the Northwest. All are welcome to stop in and contribute their time, talents, and passion for conservation. Just look for the frosted tree line spanning our front windows.



Top: Exterior of the new Portland office.
Above: Ample daylight fills the workspace.





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Spring is in the Air

Get out and volunteer!

The days are getting longer, and winter's chilly grip is loosening. It's time to emerge from hibernation and get outside with Columbia Land Trust! Sign up for our volunteer events with Sam Schongalla, volunteer@columbialandtrust.org 360-213-1214.

MARCH

Plant-and-Win Raffle on the Little White Salmon

Sunday, March 15, 10:00-2:00
Underwood, Washington

Here's how it works—for every tree you plant, receive one raffle ticket. One lucky winner will walk away with a stellar grand prize. We like to keep our "naturing" fun and lively, so expect some good food, high fives, door prizes, and beautiful scenery. The goal for the morning will be to plant 250 bare-root white oak and ponderosa pine trees on our 285-acre Little White Salmon Biodiversity Preserve.

- [a] Ben Protzman surveys red-legged frog egg masses at Indian Jack Slough.
[b] Teela Golden finds Easter eggs. Also at Indian Jack Slough.

APRIL

Not Your Average Easter Egg Hunt

Sunday, April 5, 10:30-2:30
Cathlamet, Washington

You could kick off your Easter Sunday with an egg hunt. Or you can start the day out on our Indian Jack Slough property, with a hunt of a slightly different kind. We need your help finding and collecting some 1,500 reusable plastic tree tubes within a five-acre area that



was planted with native trees and shrubs in 2011. To keep things festive, tasty treats and prizes will be hidden throughout. All are welcome, particularly those who are young at heart.

Thank you for making a world of difference in 2014

Last year, volunteers played a critical role in caring for 1,500 acres of natural lands. Together, more than 275 volunteers:

- Reforested properties on the Grays River, Little White Salmon River, Sandy River, and Washougal River with over 2,000 native trees.
- Mapped information that will lead to the decommissioning of 26 miles of logging roads on Mount St. Helens.
- Recorded scientific data on the abundance and well-being of four sensitive amphibian species of the Columbia River Estuary.
- Distributed 4,000 native plants to Backyard Habitats in the Portland metro area.
- Removed more than 1,000 pounds of garbage from the Columbia River.
- Lent professional and personal expertise.
- Worked together to protect Northwest land, waters, and wildlife they love.